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ABSTRACT

This guidebook offers strategies for creating a district context that is conducive to initiating and sustaining school improvement. Designed to provide resources for those working at school district level, the five stages of the school-improvement process are based on effective-schools research--organize, focus, analyze, develop, and implement/evaluate. Following the introduction, the first section offers an overview of the development of effective-schools research. The following sections focus on steps to achieve each of the stages involved in developing a district plan for school improvement: (1) Organize--"What does this district need to know?" (change, characteristics of an effective district, roles and responsibilities of school district personnel, stakeholder involvement); (2) Focus--"Where does the district want to go?" (getting started, demographics, beliefs and mission, district learner outcomes); (3) Analyze--"Where is the district now?" (data disaggression, learning environment (correlates), accreditation--local, state, and national); (4) Development--"How will the district get there?" (12-K student learner outcomes, alignment (curriculum, instruction, assessment), monitoring student learner outcomes, building-based improvement planning); and (5) Implement and Evaluate--"How will the district know it got there?--(building-based improvement plans, personnel evaluation systems, monitoring school improvement--district and building; implementation and continuation). Appendices contain strategic assumptions of the effective-schools process, correlates of effective schools: the first and second generation, instruments for assessing characteristics of an effective school, and two examples of Indicators of School Effectiveness District School Improvement Staff Perceptions Survey (30 pages). (Contains 54 references.) (LMI)

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Sustainable School Reform

The District Context for School Improvement

by
Lawrence W. Lezotte
Barbara C. Jacoby

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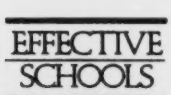

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Acknowledgments

Developing and implementing district school improvement plans based on effective schools research is not a task for the fainthearted. It takes courage, leadership, vision, determination, and a little bit of luck!

In the long run, school improvement occurs school by school, classroom by classroom. Creating a district context that will serve to initiate and sustain such improvements is a challenge to every school district in the United States. There is a considerable knowledge base of effective schools research to support individual school improvements, and it continues to expand with new research and descriptions of successful school improvement efforts. But the knowledge base that describes school improvement in the district context is not nearly as advanced. This book was planned to provide further resources for those working in the district context. It was conceived and written to help those who are attempting to reform a district and its schools. It draws on the contributions of many schools districts and many individuals.

In writing this book, we have built upon the materials contained in an earlier volume, *Workbook for Developing a District Plan for School Improvement based on the Effective Schools Research.* The co-author of that book, Dr. Michelle Maksimowicz, charted the course for district-level improvement. We would like to acknowledge her contribution in laying the foundation for this present volume.

We also acknowledge the work of the Michigan Institute for Educational Management, which has collaborated with us in offering the Leadership for School Improvement program, in which over eighty Michigan school districts participated. The MIEM program and the districts which participated in it taught us many

invaluable lessons that have been incorporated in this book. We only wish that it were possible to thank individually all the people from those Michigan districts to whom we are indebted in this undertaking.

We also extend special thanks to close to a hundred local districts in North Carolina participating in that state's Effective Schools Project over the last four years. The district planning process described in this book was used as the core curriculum for that training program. The North Carolina educators who participated, like those in Michigan, have added valuable insights to our understanding of how to create a district context for sustainable reform. Our thanks to each and every one of them.

In addition, we would like to give special recognition to two superintendents who contributed their ideas and suggestions to the development of this document—William McKinstry, Superintendent of Alma (Michigan) Public Schools, and Richard Lane, Superintendent of Hillsdale (Michigan) Public Schools.

Finally, we want to thank Kate O'Neill for her careful editing and meticulous attention to the details of language. A hearty thanks goes as well to our world-class staff at Effective Schools Products, Ltd., Becky Hulburt, Kate McManaman, and Cathy Brock, for their skill in carrying out the many tasks required in bringing this book to our readers.

Lawrence W. Lezotte
Barbara C. Jacoby

Introduction

Experiences in a variety of school districts across the country clearly verify that the building principal and staff can make significant changes resulting in increased student achievement. However, these changes are not likely to endure unless the district provides solid and sustained support. *The need for district support for school improvement cannot be overstated. This support must be reflected in the actions and attitudes of the superintendent, central office personnel, school board, and building administrators.*

School improvement is not a quick fix and should not be presented as such to stakeholder groups. Time, training, planning, commitment, and a willingness to make needed management changes are critical to the success of all school improvement efforts. School improvement based on effective schools research is collaborative in nature and demands that teachers and administrators be empowered to develop and implement district and building strategies improvement.

How to Use This Book

What follows is not a recipe. It does offer a game plan—a framework—that has the power to assure success in any district. It begins with the Board of Education requesting the development of a district plan for school improvement. The superintendent is then empowered to create a district planning team consisting of central office personnel, building-level administrators, teachers, community representatives, parents, and others. This team should have the commitment and support of the board of education and be charged with developing a district plan for school improvement which is based on the premise that all

students can learn. The superintendent and district team are also responsible for the implementation, monitoring, and ongoing evaluation of the school improvement process as defined in the district plan.

The following questions should be helpful to the superintendent and district team in the formation of the district plan. The questions are sequential and serve as a guide to plan development. Additional information about the intent and content of each question is contained in the designated stages and steps of this guidebook.

These questions can serve as a guide for the district school improvement team and also as a modified table of contents for the district plan itself.

Stage A — Organize

Step 1
- What has been the history of initiatives in the district? Have programs and projects come and gone with regularity, so that after a flurry of initial activity the district soon settles down to "life as before?"

Step 2 and *3*
- Are central office personnel aware of their specific functions in the support of school improvement efforts? What is being done to operationalize these functions?

Step 3
- What are the responsibilities of the superintendent and school board?

Step 4
- What is the nature and effectiveness of the district's internal and external communication system?

Stage B — Focus

Step 1
- How can the district get started with the school improvement process? Should students and parents be involved? What about the nonteaching staff?

Step 2
- How does the district utilize demographic data for planning and goal setting?

Step 3
- Has the school board stated a district mission? Were various stakeholder groups involved with its development?

Step 4
- Has the district identified expected learner outcomes? Are these outcomes expressed in observable, measurable student outcome terms? What is the district's definition of mastery? How will it be known that the curriculum has been mastered?

Stage C — Analyze

Step 1
- Is the district curriculum being equitably learned? How do you know?

Step 2
- How do staff members, parents, and students perceive the learning environment in the district?

Step 3
- How closely parallel is the state accreditation model to the school improvement model?

Stage D — Development

Step 1
- What are the 12–K district learner outcomes?

Step 3
- Has the district aligned the curriculum, instruction and assessment?

Step 3
- How can the district utilize norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, and other means of assessing learning?

Step 4
- How do building plans fit into the context of the district plan for school improvement?

Stage E — Implement and Evaluate

Step 1
- What should be the components of a building plan?

Step 2
- What role does accountability play in the school improvement model?

Step 3
- How does the district monitor the school improvement process?

Step 4
- In what ways is the district staff development plan an integral part of the school improvement process?

Overview and Development*

Historical Perspective of Effective Schools Research

Insights into school effectiveness must begin with a historical perspective. Effective schools research grew out of a challenge to the research of Coleman, et al. (1966) which had found a significant relationship between family background and how well children achieve. The research concluded that a school's resources have little impact on student achievement. Most evidence based on test results seemed to support Coleman's findings that children from middle- and upper middle-class families generally demonstrate higher achievement than do children from poor families. However, some educators disagreed with the conclusion that schools could have only limited impact. Effective school researchers acknowledged that family background *contributes* to student achievement levels. But they disagreed with the conclusions of Coleman that family background *determines* a child's educational attainment. Effective schools researchers found that if school resources are used effectively, schools can be successful in teaching all children the essential skills. Brookover, Levine, Stark, Edmonds, Lezotte, Rutter, and many others have identified schools that are successful at teaching *all* students, disadvantaged and nondisadvantaged, the skills needed to succeed at the next grade level.

Unfortunately, such instructionally effective schools are the exception rather than the rule, but the fact that they do exist indicates that schools can affect student achievement, regardless of socioeconomic status. (Chrispeels, Meaney 1985)

* The Overview and Development section is taken from *A Guide to the School Improvement Process Based on Effective Schools Research* by Lawrence W. Lezotte and Barbara C. Jacoby.

Definition of the Effective Schools Process

Simply stated, the Effective Schools Process is a school reform framework based on evolving research from both empirical evidence and case studies of schools across the country that have been effective in teaching the intended curriculum to *all* their students.

Out of that research, two standards for measuring effectiveness have evolved: quality and equity. The quality standard assures that the overall level of achievement in a school is high. The equity standard assures that the high achievement does not vary significantly across the subsets, race, gender, socioeconomic status of the school's student population. These standards are critical to the definition of an effective school. Coupled with the basic belief that all children can learn, these standards give direction to school reform based on effective schools research.

Characteristics or Correlates of Effective Schools

In addition to the student outcome performance standards of quality and equity, research by Edmonds, Lezotte and Brookover has shown seven operational characteristics which seem to be present in schools that meet the defined standards of effectiveness.

1. Strong instructional leadership
2. A clear and focused mission
3. A climate of high expectations for success for all students
4. A safe, orderly environment
5. The opportunity to learn and adequate time spent on academic tasks
6. Frequent monitoring of student progress
7. Positive home-school relations

Strategic Assumptions of the Effective Schools Process

Like any vision of a preferred future state, the effective schools process makes assumptions about schools of the future. Some of these assumptions represent extrapolations of educational trends that are already well under way, and others represent reasoned notions about changes that should occur if our schools are going to be successful with more of our learners. When taken together, these assumptions describe the changes that must occur in the districts that plan and implement an effective schools process.

When these nine assumptions* are transformed and come to describe a school system, they will change the culture of that district and its individual schools. Cultural change takes time, tends to occur in a million little actions, and is clearly incremental. Building on these notions, school improvement can be described as an endless succession of incremental adjustments.

1. In the future, even more than in the past, all schools will be expected to focus on teaching *for* learning as their primary mission.

2. In the future, even more than in the past, schools will be held accountable for measurable results or outcomes.

3. Educational equity will receive increasing emphasis as the number of poor and minority students continues to increase in proportion to the rest of the population.

4. Decision making will be more decentralized as the individual school is recognized as the production center of public education and, therefore, the strategic unit for planned change.

* For a complete description of each of the assumptions, see the document titled *Strategic Assumptions of the Effective Schools Process* by Lawrence W. Lezotte, Appendix A, page 220.

5. Collaboration and staff empowerment must occur if building level staff are going to become meaningfully involved in the planning, problem solving, and evaluation of their school's programs.

6. School improvement processes will emphasize the utilization of research and descriptions of effective practices as a major source of input to school change.

7. Technology will be used to accelerate the pace of feedback currently available in instructional monitoring systems used by teachers and administrators.

8. School administrators will be expected to demonstrate skill both as efficient managers and effective visionary leaders.

9. By emphasizing student outcomes, schools will be able to loosen the prescriptions of process, thus leading to school restructuring.

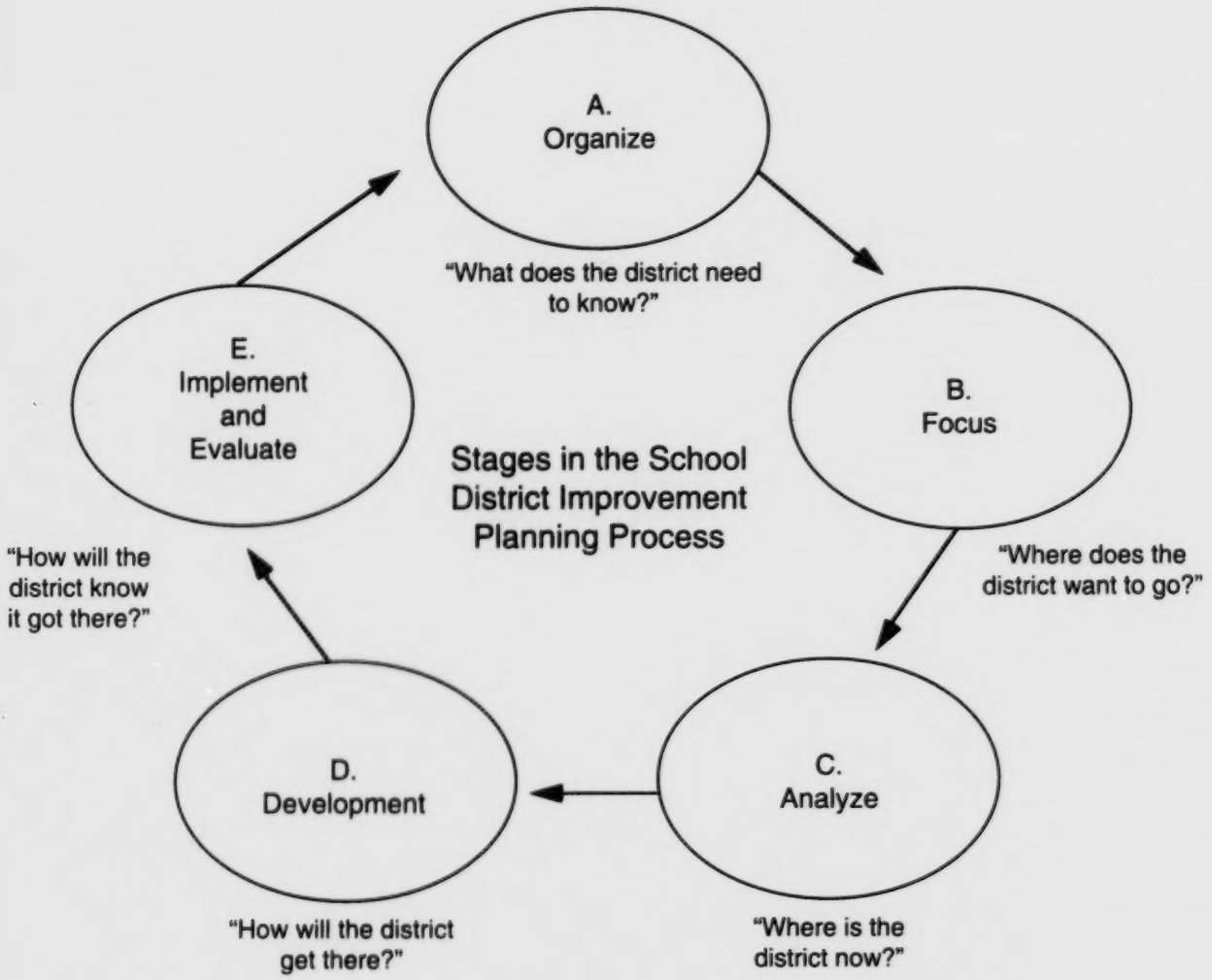
History of Planning Stage Development

Numerous school districts and state education service agencies have developed their own planning formats. An analysis of these formats reveals that most tend to contain similar components. This document borrows from the lessons learned by these various groups in proposing a planning format with certain stages and steps that assure that school improvement planning is a meaningful process—a journey—not an event. As Robert H. Waterman, Jr., stated so concisely: "The importance of planning is the *process*." (1987, p. 52)

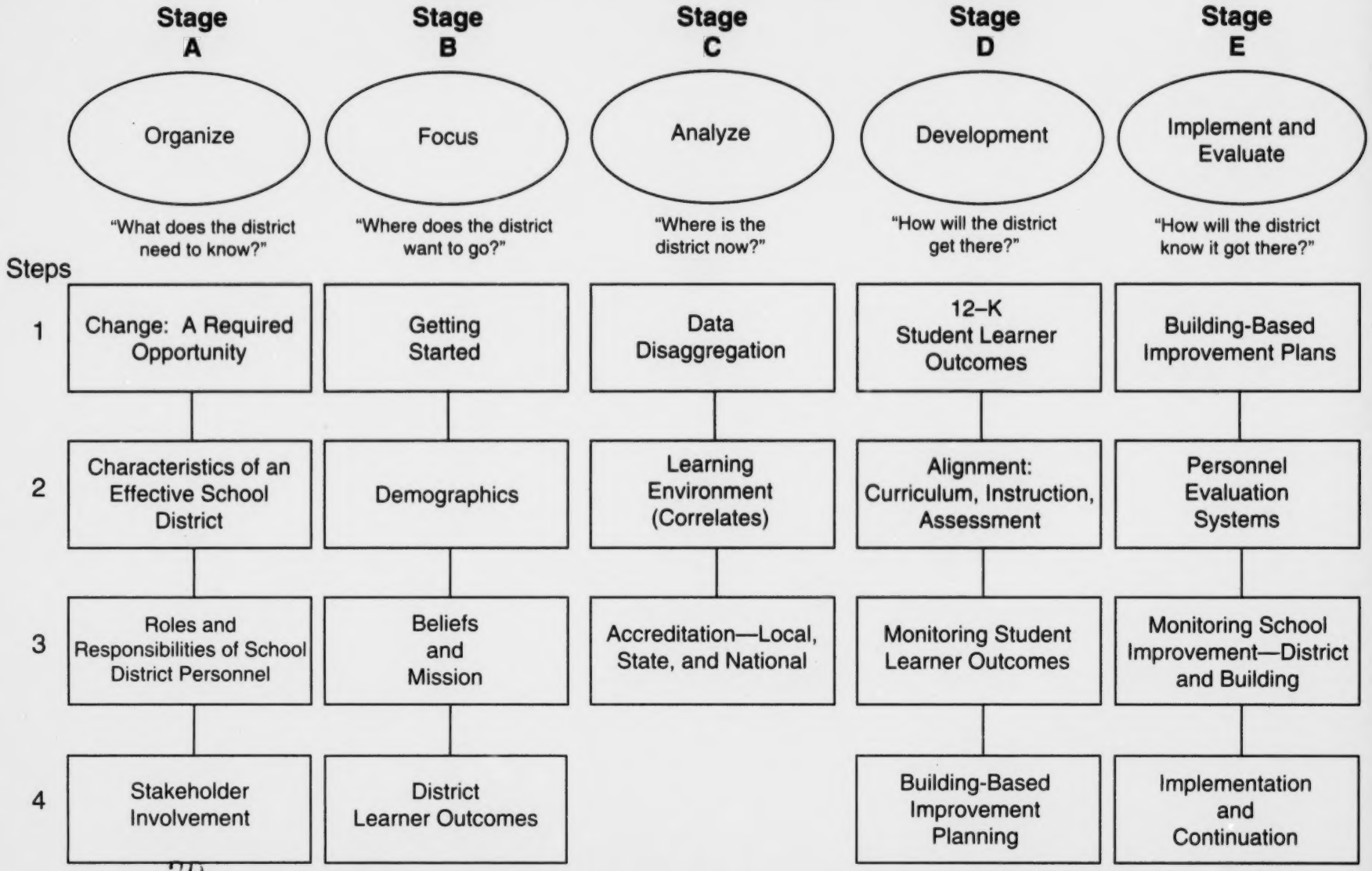
Overview of the Process

The planning stages are sequential and developmental, as illustrated in the charts that follow. This is one of the lessons learned by the school improvement team from Spring Branch Independent School District, Texas. According to the report of those who led the district improvement efforts, "part of our early failure to achieve living, breathing plans was ignorance of the developmental stages." (Guthrie, Mathews, and Wells, 1989) Each stage contains certain processes which are critical building blocks in the formation of a successful district plan. While the stages and steps are developmental, there may be times when they overlap. For example, creating an environment for change within a district is an ongoing process which needs to be maintained and institutionalized. Also, awareness and involvement of stakeholders must continue throughout the process and beyond.

Stages in the School District Improvement Planning Process



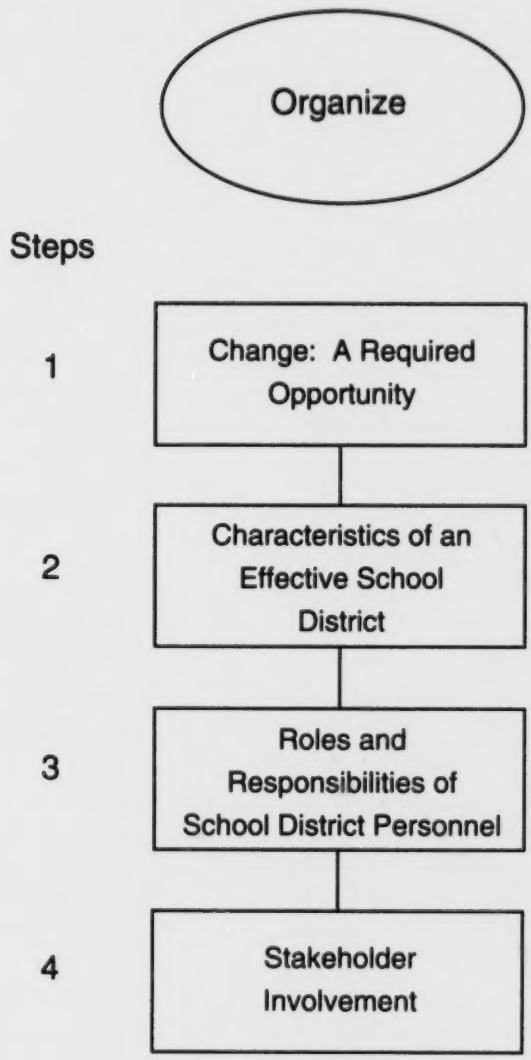
School District Improvement Planning Process



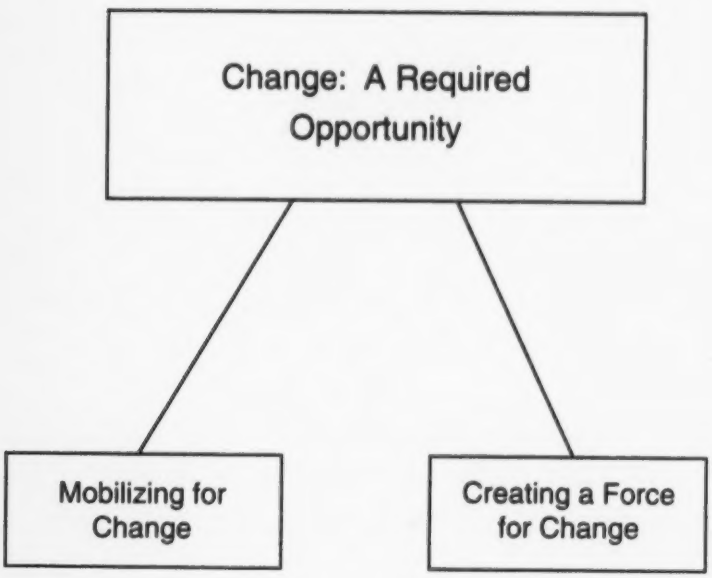
School District Improvement Planning Process

Stage A — Organize

"What does the district need to know?"



Stage A
Step 1



Step 1 — Change: A Required Opportunity

Is it safe to assume that those who claim our society has not changed over the past twenty years have been living on a distant planet? Few can argue that the world of the 1990s is no different than the world of the '60s and '70s. How many times have educators been heard to proclaim: "Kids today are different from the students I had when I began teaching"?

But are there examples which illustrate comparable change in our educational system? According to Edward Fiske in *Smart Schools, Smart Kids*, "We have been asking schools to prepare students—*all* students—for demanding, fast-changing jobs of the future with rigid structures and teaching methods designed for the factories of the early industrial age. We have been asking a nineteenth century institution to educate people for life in the twenty-first century. Public schools as currently organized are as archaic as a turn-of-the-century Model T Ford rattling down a thruway." (p. 25)

The need for change is long past the discussion stage. The questions which remain to be answered are: *Specifically what needs to be changed? How will we make these changes?* and *How will we know we are being successful?*

Mobilizing for Change

Districts differ in their capacity to manage or resist change. A district's history in managing innovation is important and should not be overlooked. The more negative experiences that teachers, administrators and others have had with previous change efforts, the more reluctant and skeptical their responses to a new idea or program, regardless of its merit. Their previous experiences have clearly

demonstrated "not to take change seriously unless central administrators *demonstrate through actions* that they should." (Fullan, 1991, p. 74)

"All major studies show that the local implementation process at the district level is essential if substantial improvement is the goal. . . . The chief executive officer and other key central administrators set the conditions for implementation to the extent that they show specific forms of support and active knowledge and understanding of the realities of attempting to put a change into practice." (p. 75)

Critical mass of support

Schools represent classic bureaucracies, best equipped to do again what they have been doing. School improvement will require schools to change many patterns and practices. Given the resistance of people to change, what are the best ways to get changes in place? In his book *Adhocracy*, Robert Waterman suggests that the answer is to create an ad hoc group or "critical mass of support." This critical mass is made up of representatives of all the major educational stakeholder groups.

Waterman claims that successful change comes about in an environment that fosters the use of ad hoc problem-solving work groups or teams. He suggests several critical attributes of such groups. The groups should:

1. Cut across old boundaries and pull the right group of people together to go after a new opportunity or needed change.

2. Represent a powerful tool for effecting change.

3. Mount a frontal attack on everyone's pet nemesis—lack of communication.

4. Take advantage of the fact that the best thinking very often results from a team effort.

5. Require the leader to be "hip-deep" in supporting the work of the group. To create an ad hoc group and send it on its way is likely to be the "kiss of death" for the effort.

Waterman found that a well-conceived team can survive dismal management and still produce a good product. However, a poorly launched team can run smoothly and still not get the job done. "Adhocracy—and therefore a company's ability to take change in stride—will not work unless it is properly set up." (p. 34) Waterman's requirements for getting off to the right start are discussed below:

- **Clear and visible support from the top.** "If you don't have the clear support and blessing of the senior management, a task force won't work." (p. 21) To work successfully, a group has to have conspicuous and obvious-to-everyone support from central office and the school board.

- **Project teams should include the "best" people.** The work of school improvement teams is very important in a school district, so the "best" people ought to participate. The team leader need not be the expert in the area being studied or a member of the top executive ranks because this tends to stifle discussion. The others tend to defer to either expertise or power. The task force leader ought to have good process skills and be someone who is fun to be with and is genuinely liked by team members.

- **Team size is an important consideration.** Teams should be large enough to represent all parts of the district that will be affected by their work, yet small enough to get the job done efficiently. According to Waterman, the best teams number three to seven. More important than size itself is the need to match the team size and composition with the issues. Pick teams that collectively reflect the breadth, nature, and complexity of the problem.

- **Broad involvement is needed.** Waterman states that even though the team is small, part of the challenge is to find ways to encourage "massive involvement" of those who have to change. People love their own ideas, and they respond best to those processes in which their ideas influence decisions. People change for emotional reasons far more than for rational reasons. Processes that appeal to our emotions invite our input and take our suggestions seriously.

- **Avoid going for solutions too quickly.** Researchers have found that a common problem in group efforts is the tendency to pounce on solutions. Groups may want to jump straight to solutions before they have defined the problem, collected information, considered alternatives, and examined research and best practices.

- **Structure the task.** The team leader must help to minimize member frustration by giving structure to the task. Waterman recommends that the task be structured like a scientific investigation. Frame several hypotheses, get the facts, reframe the hypotheses, and get more facts until the answers to the major issues emerge.

- **Get the facts and declare war on the problem.** The early phases of a team project are mostly spent gathering, analyzing, and testing facts. *We live in a society that is data-rich but information-poor.*

- **Expect the plan to include implementation strategies.** The goal of a well-run ad hoc team is not a report containing a number of high-sounding recommendations. The goal is *change*. Most special teams fail because

they are not expected to develop a plan for implementing their recommendations. When implementation is left to the bureaucracy, more often than not the status quo wins out.

- **Communication with the bureaucracy is necessary.** Unless those in the bureaucracy are kept in touch with what the project team is doing and why, they may find ways to make sure adhocracy fails.

- **Success comes when success is expected.** A can-do attitude on the part of the leadership and the team helps the cause of change and the project team.

- **Make the launch of the effort special.** Every ad hoc endeavor deserves a distinctive kickoff. The top management should be creative in setting the team on its way to establish the importance of the team and its task.

Creating a Force for Change

According to Michael Fullan, research findings on the change process can be used as guidelines to help educators understand the development, implementation and continuation phases of school improvement efforts. However, it must be remembered that the uniqueness of the setting is critical, i.e., what works in one district may not work in another. This uniqueness is one reason why school improvement efforts have proven to be very successful in some districts and not as successful in others.

Fullan goes on to say: "The research on the role of organizations in change indicates that 'planned change has become a matter of both motivating from without

and orchestrating from within.' . . . The individual school may be the unit of change, but frequently change is the result of system initiatives that live or die based on the strategies and supports offered by the larger organization." (1991, p. 73)

Change is personal and anxiety producing. Fullan quotes Schoen's characterization of change as a process which involves " 'passing through the zones of uncertainty . . . the situation of being at sea, of being lost, of confronting more information than you can handle.' " (Fullan, pp. 31–32) There is a difference between voluntary and imposed change notes Fullan, but he emphasizes that "all change involves loss, anxiety, and struggle." (p. 31)

District personnel involved with school improvement efforts will be confronted very early in the process with the "uncomfortable rumblings" of anxiety. Since school improvement is a change process which affects *all*, this anxiety will be a shared phenomenon. It is the wise leader who learns and understands the dynamics of change. *Because it is the district superintendent who "is the single most important individual for setting the expectations and tone of the pattern of change within the local district.*" (p. 191)

Change affects beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Since the 1960s, much research and many articles have attempted to explain the change process. It is not the intent of this publication to replicate this information. But a discussion of the process is included here in order to caution school district leaders to remember that change is a complex process. It is complex because it requires time and effort; it is a process of unlearning as much as learning and is dependent upon changes in people's beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. As Jennifer James (1990), a cultural anthropologist, commented:

Change produces stress. Change that is too fast tears some of the fabric of the school's culture. People can't handle it. They resist.

To be successful change agents, school leaders need to take a cue from cultural anthropology and recognize the significance of the dance of life—two steps forward, one step back.

Nostalgia is at the base of the step back. People should never be abruptly stripped of their illusion of yesterday, that things were better in the past.

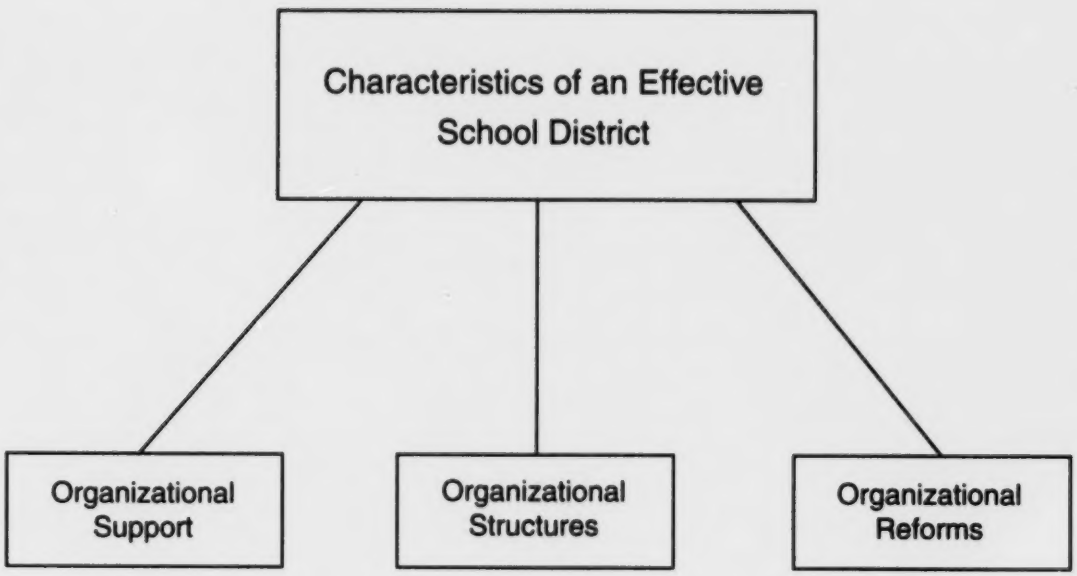
Forcing change causes people to fear that things are out of control. Leaders need to realize that the step back is an important part of meaningful change. The wise leader allows the step back while keeping those things he or she believes are most important for future improvement. (p. 28)

Change is a process. Most researchers see three broad phases to the change process. Phase I—initiation or adoption—consists of the process that leads up to and includes a decision to adopt or proceed with a change. Phase II—implementation or initial use (usually the first two or three years of use)—involves the first experiences of attempting to put an idea or reform into practice. Phase III—called continuation or institutionalization—refers to whether the change gets built in as an ongoing part of the system or disappears by way of a decision to discard or through attrition. The chart below depicts the three phases and adds the concept of outcome to provide a more complete overview of the change process.

A Simplified Overview of the Change Process

The two-way arrows imply that the process is not linear, but rather one in which events at one phase influence events at another phase. Another confounding part to the change process is the practice of most school districts of initiating multiple changes simultaneously.

Stage A
Step 2



Step 2 — Characteristics of an Effective School District

Organizational Support

Individual schools within a district can make significant progress in the school improvement planning process. However, this progress can proceed only so far before it becomes apparent that district involvement is critical. *A district must have in place a means to support, reinforce and help guide the school-by-school process.* Levine and Lezotte stress that, "The success of an effective schools project depends on a judicious mixture of autonomy among participating faculties and a measure of directiveness from the central office, a kind of 'directed autonomy' . . . . except in the case of isolated maverick schools that have become effective largely on their own, success also requires considerable direction and support from central leadership.. . . This conclusion is compatible with those of researchers who have studied innovation in general and found that it is most likely to be successful when it combines elements of 'bottom up' planning and decisionmaking with 'top-down' stimuli and support in setting directions and guiding the change process." (1990, p. 44)

Numerous local school districts have developed and implemented district plans which have made it possible for the district and its schools to create more favorable learning opportunities for all students. This district plan becomes a blueprint or map which clearly builds the partnership-like responsibilities of district personnel. The plan states precisely how and when these responsibilities will be met.

For example, Prince George's County (Maryland) Public Schools has created a document used to guide the district and its schools through the steps of the school improvement process. In the document, specific characteristics of a supportive district are delineated as well as implications for planning and action:

- Strong, instructionally focused leadership
- Clear and focused mission
- Frequent monitoring of student progress
- Climate of high expectations for success for all students and staff
- Purposeful and supportive involvement of parents, other citizens, and business and community groups
- Curriculum and instructional programs that ensure opportunities for every student to learn basic and higher order content and skills
- Support for schools to ensure a safe and orderly learning environment for students
- High rate of attendance for students and all school and non-school based staff
- Strong staff development program which reflects and supports School Improvement activities
- Clear understanding on the part of all staff as to their specific roles and responsibilities in contributing to the School Improvement Process, and an evaluation process which supports this understanding. (1991, p. 22)

Similarly, Pajak and Glickman (1989) conducted a study of school districts in Georgia which had demonstrated sustained improvement in student achievement over a three-year period. The study, summarized in this excerpt below, identified the variables which contributed to district school improvement.

> In each of the three districts, the superintendent and central office supervisors played critical roles in improving the quality of instruction. . . . Each of the three superintendents communicated to the community and to the district's faculty that "the children come first." These superintendents also sought financial support from the community for improving instruction in each district.
>
> A common language which centered on instruction and curriculum refinement was found in each district. . . . Talking about students, lessons, and curriculum was the norm, not an aberration.
>
> All three districts put into place an organizational structure in which supervisory support was established to encourage instructional dialogue. These districts established either supervisory positions at the central office or an instructional lead teacher at each building whose primary responsibility was to engage

teachers in talking about pedagogy, students' progress, and curriculum. These districts also committed time to allow teachers to meet for the purpose of analyzing information, planning strategies, and sharing ways of implementing new techniques. . . .

The leadership for school improvement varied in each district and was dependent upon the type of organizational structure that had been established. . . . [However, each] district had strong leadership in the superintendency. Each superintendent established and articulated a clear purpose for the . . . [organization]. This message was clear to the administrators, teaching staff and the community. . . . [Each district] also approached the task of improving student learning as a collective effort and recognized the talent and leadership that existed within the district—both in the administration and teaching ranks." (p. 62) (From abstract of Pajak and Glickman in *Effective Schools Research Abstracts*, Vol. 4, No. 2.)

Shoemaker (1986) delineated the role of the district office in six major categories:

- *initiating*, including statement of mission and goals, introduction of a collaborative planning process, and public commitment from the superintendent of schools and the board of education;
- *planning*, including development of outcomes-based learning objectives to help "teachers and principals focus their energies on improved teaching and learning";
- *conferring legitimacy*, including development of policies to "protect" practices involving systematic homework, rigorous student retention standards, expansion of academic learning time, and other activities involving correlates of effectiveness;
- *enhancing implementation*, including support for staff development, technical assistance in collecting and analyzing data, and provision of appropriate resources;
- *evaluating*, including assistance in communicating and using data to affect practice in participating schools; and
- *sustaining effort*, including a variety of actions to maintain motivation and continuity across the many years required for fundamental improvement in schools. (pp. 5–6)

Further studies have shown that central office leadership is particularly important in ensuring continuity of leadership at the building level. This leadership is a key consideration in describing the demise of promising efforts in schools where a new principal was unwilling or unable to maintain a school improvement momentum. "In our own experience, some effective schools projects have been either severely compromised or virtually destroyed in districts where central administrators maintained the facade and terminology associated with a project but diverted participants' attention to other topics temporarily spotlighted in the latest educational journals and magazines." (Levine and Lezotte, 1990, p. 45)

Several years ago, the Middle Cities Educational Association (MCEA) was formed in Michigan for the purpose of providing staff development and other assistance for school personnel concerned with urban school problems. Throughout its existence, MCEA has been involved with the school improvement process based on effective schools research. Principals from these elementary and secondary schools have suggested numerous ways that central office should provide support for school improvement efforts:

1. Communicate superintendent's vision and commitment for school improvement.

2. Assist in providing the time/opportunity for planning and collaboration at the school.

3. Establish a mechanism for problem solving.

4. Establish an effective K–12 communication system.

5. Establish a mechanism to provide information and research on best practices.

6. Establish a district school improvement coordinating team consisting of school and central office representatives.

7. Establish board policies/goals to assist (i.e., budget, personnel).

8. Provide disaggregated data.

9. Provide financial support (i.e., released time, recognition, resource people/ consultants).

10. Provide a coordinator or coordination.

11. Establish staff development procedures/policies.

12. Encourage supportive business partnerships (i.e., school improvement involvement, commitment).

Organizational Structures

Springfield (Massachusetts) Public Schools restructured its central office in order to support, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of schools in that district. In order to accomplish this task, a team was directed to:

1. Research and understand the function and characteristics of an effective school and district.
2. Define and identify the role and functions of the Central Office as it relates to supporting effective schools.
3. Recommend how the Central Office can be optimally organized to support the development and implementation of effective schools.
4. Work in conjunction with others to help prepare the recommendations for the reorganization of the Central Office.

The team determined that support from central office should be provided in the following six categories:

Needs of Children
Emotional
Social
Intellectual
Spiritual

Instruction
Utilization of space
Curriculum/Instruction
Teaching methods
Professional development
Laws and regulations
Special programs
Assessment
Materials, supplies

Personnel
Professional
Nonprofessional
Staff development

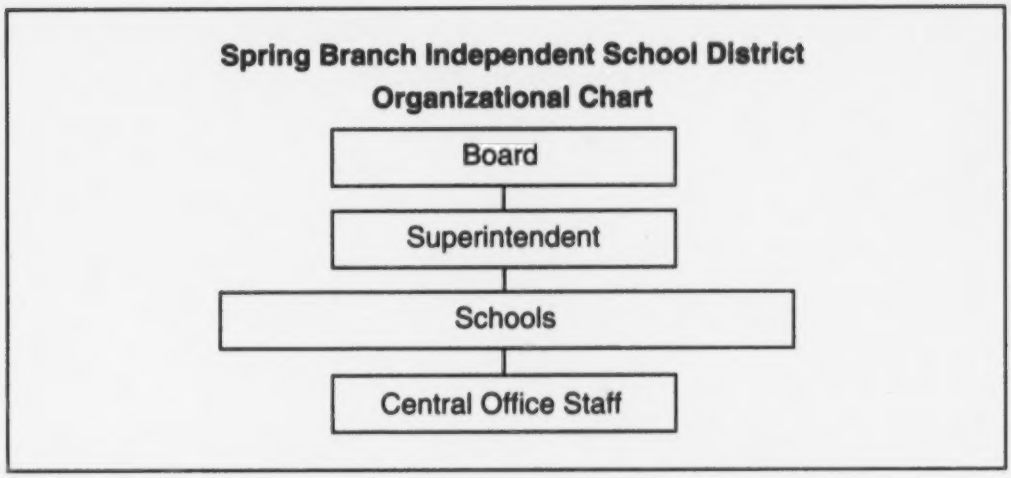
Safety
Laws and regulations
Health
Positive environment

Support
Building maintenance
Laws and regulations
Food
Transportation
Record keeping
Budget
Technology
Equipment

Community
Parental involvement
Community involvement
- Business
- Citizens
- Agencies

Springfield Public Schools. *Blueprint for Excellence.* p. 9

Spring Branch (Texas) Independent School District reasoned that there was a need to "move away from the previous top-down management style to a . . . . 'central office as support' paradigm." (Guthrie, Mathews, and Wells, 1990, p. 4) Thus, on Spring Branch's new organizational chart the central office was on the bottom of the chart undergirding the work of the school.



In addition, Spring Branch developed a conceptual overview of school-based decision making. This chart delineates the seven major functions performed in the district by central office or individual schools or through a collaborative effort. The matrix provided district school improvement teams with the knowledge of how "we will do things in the future."

Function	Central Office	School	Collaborative
Personnel Management			
Human Resource Development			
Budget			
Organization			
Curriculum			
Monitoring			
Climate Marketing			

Organizational Reforms

School improvement based on effective schools research is defined as a building-based planning process that is goal directed, outcomes oriented, research based, data driven, and long term in nature. School improvement is a collaborative process and is best managed through the use of a school-based group or team. School improvement also means change—change from the present way of doing things.

Site-based management and restructuring are terms with basically similar definitions. Restructuring refers to organizational change that departs from past practices. Site-based management and restructuring are frequently used synonymously in current reform literature. Many believe that site-based management represents a system which changes districts from centralized, top-down decision-making systems to more flexible and efficient local management systems in which school staff have greater autonomy to make school decisions.

Total quality management

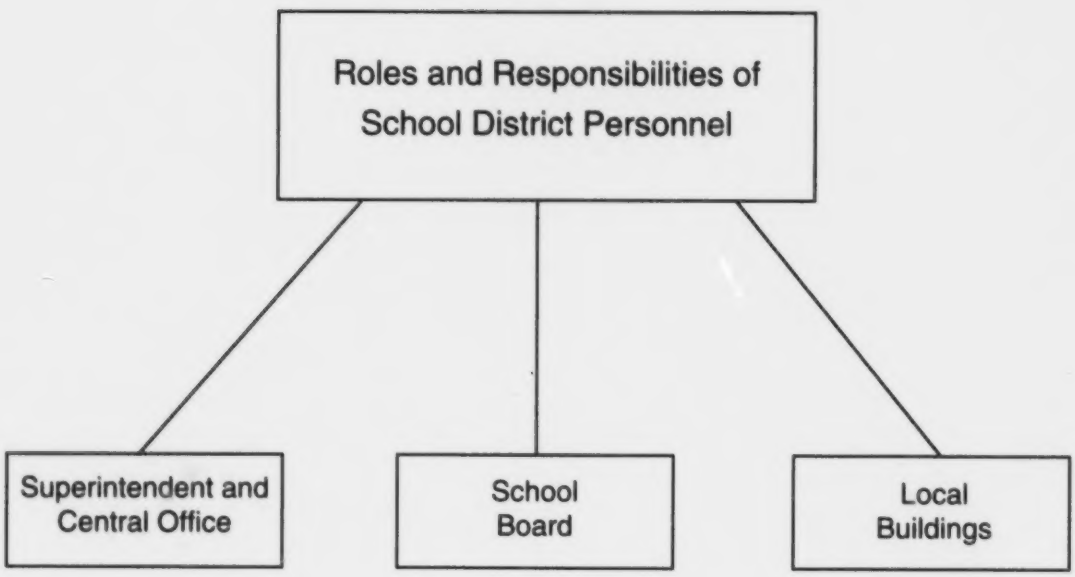
The Total Quality Management movement is sweeping the nation's organizations, both in the public and private sector. Many schools and school districts are looking at W. Edwards Deming's Principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) as a new theory of management with an accompanying set of tools for implementation that may help schools become more effective for more students. In *Creating the Total Quality Effective School* (1992), Lezotte integrates these principles into the effective schools framework. He describes how many of the quality tools can be used by local schools and districts in order to monitor their

instructional systems more closely and, in the name of enhanced quality, to adjust their practices to increase the learning of all students.

The principles of TQM have a remarkable kinship with the tenets of effective schools. School districts that plan and implement a program of school improvement based on the effective schools research will find it relatively easy to incorporate TQM principles into their effort. The one caution that needs to be mentioned has to do with the critical concept of educational equity. Business-based examples of TQM seek to develop systems that produce "zero defects," and in one sense that is what the effective school is all about. However, businesses usually do not have to be as explicitly concerned (as schools must be) with the success of all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups within the organization.

School improvement leaders should become familiar with the quality principles as they relate to schools. When the leaders believe that the school staff have the knowledge base of effective schools in place and teaching well in hand, they should introduce the principles of TQM. Careful use of these principles will further strengthen the school improvement effort.

Stage A
Step 3



Step 3 — Roles and Responsibilities of School District Personnel

Superintendent and Central Office

There are relatively few research studies on the role of the superintendent in school improvement efforts. However, one California study has validated the results of earlier research projects which studied superintendents of effective school districts. This study concluded that the superintendents were *actively involved* and *influential* in:

- developing both district and school goals
- developing procedures for selecting staff (particularly new administrators)
- supervising, evaluating, and training principals
- establishing and regularly monitoring a "district wide instructional and curricular focus"
- monitoring the use of standardized teacher evaluation procedures
- monitoring curriculum and instruction through test analysis and resource allocation (Murphy and Hallinger, 1986, pp. 220–228)

Eaker, Ranells, and DuFour (1991) call district leadership a prerequisite for success with the school improvement process:

> While numerous individual schools have successfully implemented effective schools programs without help or direction from the district office, it is very difficult to convince teachers that school improvement will be the major thrust of the district without visible and vocal leadership from the school board and superintendent. The superintendent is in the best position to promote, protect and defend the district's school improvement efforts. Some superintendents can cause initial excitement, but when it comes time to roll up their sleeves and do the "down and dirty work," they lose momentum. If the superintendent isn't willing to confront those behaviors which weaken the quality and efficiency of a school's efforts to become more effective, or is incapable of making a long-term commitment, the improvement process is doomed to failure. A superintendent determined to bring about significant school improvement must sustain a long-

term vision, create a culture which accepts change, and commit to the school improvement process.

The district-level leadership for effective schools must manifest itself in at least three observable ways: planning, monitoring, and modeling:

Planning

If certain conditions are truly valued, plans are made to see to it that these conditions occur. School improvement will not be taken seriously if the process never moves beyond the rhetoric. Planning should be viewed as the means for implementing the things which are valued the most.

At the district level, it is critical to establish processes and procedures that lead to a shared view of what the entire district should become. In other words, there should be a shared, comprehensive view of the future of the entire district. . .

Monitoring

If school improvement is to be viewed as an important goal within the district, a plan for monitoring the school improvement process must be developed. Monitoring is the way leaders pay attention to the things they value the most. In any organization, what gets monitored gets done. This is one way the leadership of the district signals what is important. It communicates to those within the district that, "We care enough about this program—we think it is so important—that we're checking on it to see if we're doing a good job and seeking ways we can do even better." Furthermore, monitoring is a key strategy for raising expectations within a school or school district. If district leadership first helps those within a district identify what is to be valued within its schools, and then pays attention to those key values, it raises expectations throughout the district.

Modeling

. . . It is through modeling that leaders advertise and communicate their personal values as well as the central values around which the organization is to operate. The *behavior* of the district leaders convinces those in the school district of what is *really* important. Do the school district leaders model the behaviors they expect from others? Are their day-to-day behaviors congruent with their professed values? (pp. 8–10)

School Board

Patricia First (1992) has suggested that school boards of the future may be viewed by using four frames developed by Bolman and Deal: structural, human resources, political, and symbolic.

- **structural**—boards will restrict themselves to making policy; superintendents will manage the district
- **human resources**—boards will be instrumental in tailoring a school district so that people can get the job done and feel good about what they're doing
- **political**—boards will need to put aside demands of different interest groups and focus on their responsibilities for children's lives and for society's future
- **symbolic**—boards will be viewed by the public as a group of people who care about children and are going about the task of making it possible to educate all of them well (First, pp. 193–194)

Prince George's County Public Schools (Maryland) has defined the roles and responsibilities of the school board in its district plan:

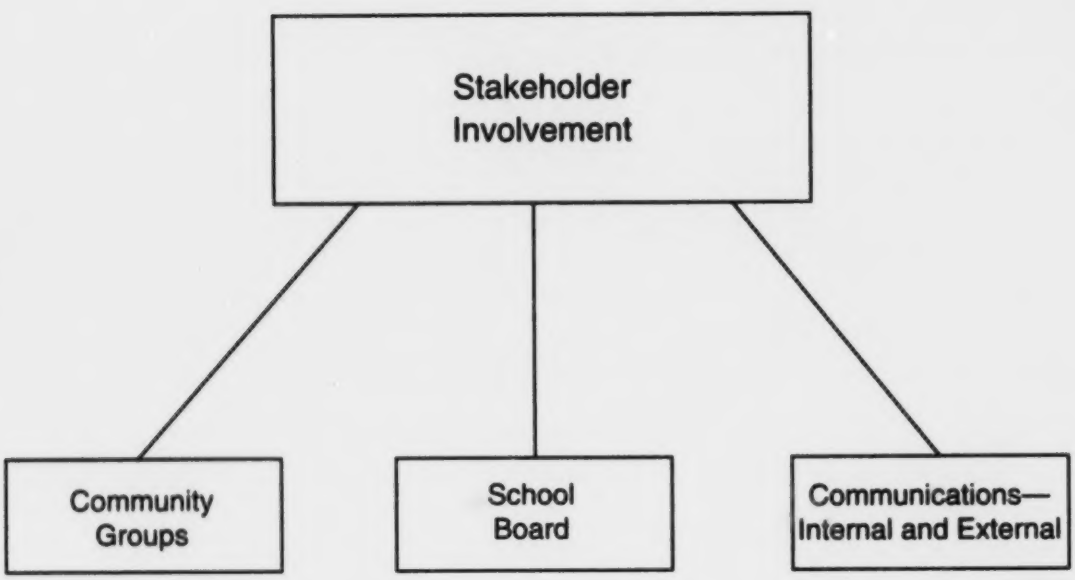
- Develops policies which support the school system mission and improvement goals.
- Assertively seeks resources to support the school system mission, improvement goals and strategic plan.
- Describes the school system mission, goals and program to the community.
- Promotes community involvement in addressing the school system mission and reaching its improvement goals. (1991, p. 40)

Local Buildings

The district plan should designate the "rules" for buildings in the development of their plans. More information about building planning can be found in Stage D, Step 4. However, Prince George's County Schools indicates the following responsibilities of local schools:

- Develop a local school mission statement and goals which highlight quality *and* equity, teaching and learning, and assurance that *all* students learn the essential curriculum
- Maintain high expectations for student success and convey an attitude that all students can learn
- Establish and implement a site-based decision making team that is characterized by shared decision making
- Provide appropriate instruction for all students using a variety of teaching strategies, to ensure that students learn the essential curriculum
- Design a schedule which ensures that students have sufficient opportunities to learn in appropriate class and/or group placements which avoid long term placement in homogeneously grouped, low achieving classes
- Establish and enforce clear standards for student conduct to assure a safe and orderly environment
- Plan and implement a local school staff development program based upon priority needs identified through the School Improvement Process
- Invite parents to participate actively with the school in support of their children
- Frequently monitor student performance using a variety of assessment instruments, including criterion referenced tests
- Conduct a yearly needs analysis which includes use of student achievement data (test scores, grades, classroom performance) to assess skill needs of students, plan and adjust instruction, and assess students' progress
- Develop and regularly update a School Improvement Plan
- Establish and monitor procedures for ensuring high rates of student and staff attendance
- Include data from Maryland School Performance Program data-based areas in yearly needs analysis
- Address all Maryland School Performance Program data-based areas in the School Improvement Plan (p. 53)

Stage A
Step 4



Step 4 — Stakeholder Involvement

A very loud message is being heard from school districts where school improvement efforts have hit a snag: *"Don't get too far ahead of your stakeholder groups, particularly the community and school board."* It is critical that the district keep the community informed, involved in, and committed to all major school improvement efforts. It is even more critical that the board be continually updated and informed so that there will be no "surprises." The school improvement boat can easily be dashed on the rocks of gossip, innuendo and unanswered questions. Its direction can be significantly altered with the change of a single school board member, unless there is broad-based community support.

Community Groups

Several school districts have undertaken vigorous campaigns to keep members of the community informed and have provided opportunities for involvement in their school improvement process. For example, Hillsdale (Michigan) School District (1991) invited members of the community to become part of the team which was instrumental in creating the district mission and statement of beliefs about teaching for learning (see p. 84 for more detailed information). In addition, the Hillsdale superintendent has monthly morning coffee meetings with school district retirees in order to keep them informed and answer their questions about school improvement and other district issues.

The superintendent in Frederick County, Maryland, has made a videotape which depicts the district's school improvement kick-off activities. The tape is available for use with a variety of community groups.

Another superintendent has monthly meetings with the realtors in the community to keep them informed of school improvement efforts. Still another has become a friend of the senior citizens (i.e., voters) in the community by donating a used but mechanically sound bus for their use.

School Board

School board members must become and remain knowledgeable about school improvement based on effective schools research. In some districts, this knowledge is provided by a consultant from outside the district. There are times when an outsider can be beneficial in answering questions and citing examples from other districts. Some boards, however, have served as their own resources. For example, the Alma, Michigan, school board formed study groups with members of the community and central office. They read pertinent articles and research findings and reported and discussed what was learned.

Successful districts have taken as long as six months to a year to study the related research thoroughly. Board members should have the opportunity to question and express concerns and begin to feel comfortable with the research findings. It's also important that the board understand the research findings and the implications for the district. When the board feels comfortable with its knowledge of school improvement based on effective schools research, a resolution should be passed committing the district to a long-range school improvement planning process. This resolution should take the form of a directive to the superintendent which indicates the board's desire to study a completed "plan to plan" for school improvement in the district. One school board gave the superintendent six months to complete such a document.

Communications — Internal and External

At a recent meeting of superintendents and principals who had been involved for the past two years with the school improvement planning process, the following question was asked: "Using 20/20 hindsight, what would you have done differently in your district which would have aided you in your school improvement efforts?" The unanimous answer was "A better communication system — both internal and external."

In working with a range of school districts throughout the United States, it has been observed that generally districts tend to do a poor job of communicating both internally and externally. Lack of an effective means of letting everyone know what is happening in school improvement within a district can cause unnecessary difficulties. The district plan should address how communication is going to flow between and within central office, school buildings, and the community.

It is unfortunate that professional educators have not developed the habit of learning from each other. Teachers seldom have the opportunity to share their successes and frustrations with school improvement efforts. They rarely get together to learn from each other. The need for this valuable experience was made very clear at a 1992 meeting of K–12 school improvement team members in the Portsmouth, Virginia, schools. After a day of sharing and discussing problems, solutions, and other school improvement issues, the teachers declared the time spent as being immensely valuable and requested that they meet together on a regular basis. Furthermore, the teams expressed the need to meet, not just as elementary or secondary teams but as K–12 teams, in order to have total school articulation.

Because the nature of the Portsmouth experience was so positive for teachers, the question arose as to whether building principals are afforded similar opportunities to discuss school improvement concerns and celebrations. In most districts, regularly scheduled meetings where principals can discuss and learn from each other are a rare occurrence.

The following communications ideas have been successfully used in various school districts:

Internal

- Provide adequate time to discuss school improvement efforts on a regular basis at administrative staff meetings. Put this discussion item at the beginning rather than the end of the agenda.
- Report school improvement activities in weekly school bulletins that go home to parents.
- Rename district inservice days "School Improvement Days."
- Add a school improvement section to each school board agenda.
- Have a school improvement section in each edition of the district newsletter.
- Have each building school improvement team member be responsible for reporting team meeting activities to two to four staff members.
- Provide ongoing awareness presentations and research updates to school board members, administrators, teaching and support staff, and parents.
- Develop a school improvement professional library.
- "Talk the talk and walk the walk" of school improvement at every appropriate opportunity (i.e., model the premises of school improvement).
- Celebrate school improvement efforts in each building on a regular basis.
- Provide a district "kick-off" for school improvement activities at the beginning of each school year.
- Create a school board communications policy (see p. 49 for example).
- Make the district mission highly visible on banners, posters, cards for students and teachers, stationery, notebooks, radio, TV spots, etc.

- Invite school board members to attend district school improvement team meetings and training sessions.
- Develop a matrix for both internal and external communications to determine various publics and current communication techniques. Note where there are gaps or overlaps. For example:

Publics — Internal and External

Communication Techniques	Students	Parents	Teaching Staff	School Board	Non-parents	Business	Others
Local newspaper		√	√	√	√	√	
District newsletter		√	√	√			
Teacher notes	√	√					
Other kinds of com-munication							

External

- Send congratulatory notes to students and their parents regarding successful school achievements.
- Include parents on school-level school improvement teams.
- Send parents information updates on school improvement activities through district-level newsletters, individual school newsletters, and public hearings.
- Use the local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations to spread the "good news" about school improvement successes.
- Involve community members who are not parents — research indicates that they, as well as parents, want to know:

- √ What's being taught and learned in schools?
- √ How are basic subjects being taught?
- √ How are school funds spent?
- √ How does the school board operate and reach decisions?

- Have an Educational Fair — invite parents and other community members.
- Develop school/business partnerships — one district "adopted" a local shopping center and was provided with a wide variety of business experiences.
- Involve as many stakeholder groups as possible in the development of the district mission.
- Invite local service groups to meet/eat at schools.
- Include present and retired teachers in student induction into National Honor Society; students, invite "teachers who made a difference in your life."

The following communications policy adopted in the Wyoming (Michigan) Public Schools in 1990 is a good example.

Community Relations Policy

The Board of Education recognizes the right of district residents to be kept informed of policies, actions and decisions affecting the operations of the Wyoming Public Schools. The Board also believes in establishing effective communications practices internally with staff and with members of the broader community of city, state and national publics that are involved with the school. An on-going plan of two way communication is essential to building positive public relations with these groups and the Board establishes its commitment to maintaining such a plan.

To meet the goals for keeping residents informed, the Board directs the Superintendents to conduct regular public relations activities that provide information about instruction, district finances and school programs and services. Through district staff, the Superintendent will direct the production and distribution of school sponsored publications such as newsletters and special mailings of informational letters.

District residents are encouraged to attend meetings of the Board of Education and to share their views with members of the Board. Residents are also invited to participate in school activities at the local building level through membership in parent/teacher groups, booster clubs for academics, band and sports, and through attendance at school plays and other student performances. Parents are particularly encouraged to participate in the school events mentioned above as well as attend school Open House programs and Parent-Teacher Conferences. The Board will also periodically assess community attitudes through more formal methods such as public information meetings and by administering public opinion surveys.

The Board also recognizes the need for all staff to be well informed of district policies to enhance the schools' relations with the community. To that end, the Board directs the Superintendent to maintain positive relations with employee groups, provide written communications to staff regarding district goals, objectives and practices, and seek employee feedback through open, two-way communications with all employees. The Board furthermore encourages the Superintendent and public relations staff to provide opportunities for school employees to become better acquainted with the concepts and philosophies regarding public information and communications programs.

The important role that the news media play in providing school information to the public requires the district to maintain open lines of communication with all news media representatives. All available information regarding district policies, procedures and activities will be provided factually and in a timely, consistent manner through both formal and informal methods of communication.

The Board of Education is committed to encouraging the Superintendent, members of the administrative staff, and all school employees to participate in the district's efforts to implement this policy. (p. 452)

The following checklist may provide helpful insights to the district communication system. A checklist can often indicate what is currently being done and can also serve as a guide for starting other activities. A suggestion for use of this checklist: the superintendent evaluates his/her own performance and representatives from various stakeholder groups do the same. A comparison of these various perceptions could be quite valuable.

PR Evaluation Checklist for Superintendents*

( ) Have you established administrative procedures in support of board policy on public relations?

( ) Do you set a climate of openness and two-way communication with the community, board, staff, and students?

( ) Do you establish PR goals, objectives and plans for each year to communicate with all of the schools' publics?

( ) Do you establish a network of targeted audiences and effectively communicate with those groups?

( ) Are you readily accessible to media and key staff members?

( ) Do you always use the four-point communication test when decisions are made:

_____ Who needs to know this?
_____ What do they need to know?
_____ What is the best time and vehicle to communicate this?
_____ How will we know the message has been received?

( ) Do you have readily available the demographic information needed to communicate effectively with your various publics?

( ) Are you visible in the community?

( ) Do you speak at least once a month to service and community groups? Do you require your principals to speak to at least three such groups a year?

( ) Do you brag with sensible pride about your student and staff accomplishments?

* Adapted from: *Evaluating Your School PR Investment*, National School Public Relations Association, 1501 Lee Highway, Arlington, Virginia 22209.

( ) Do you make sure all your school buildings appear to be good neighbors in their local neighborhoods?

( ) Do you respond promptly to telephone calls from parents and staff?

( ) Did you hire a competent school PR professional to help you plan and implement your PR program?

( ) Did you make that PR person part of your administrative cabinet?

( ) Did you evaluate your PR program at least annually?

( ) Do you provide orientation material for all new board members, as well as for board candidates?

( ) Do you provide resources and direction for PR inservice workshops for all employees?

( ) Do you assess what kinds of behavioral changes you expect as a result of the PR program?

( ) Do you always release information internally (especially controversial information) before going to the media and general public?

( ) Do you make sure that your internal communication program is ongoing and effective through a monitoring feedback system?

( ) Do you initiate community employee/student lunches and breakfasts so that two-way communication can be practiced?

( ) Do you instill in building principals their leadership role in building-level PR programs?

( ) Do you keep key staff people informed on decisions made or issues percolating in your community?

( ) Are you visible to staff?

( ) Do you react to the media in a professional manner when a negative story is published or broadcast?

( ) Do you develop wholesome, face-to-face relationships with the editors and reporters in your area?

( ) Do you open your school building and facilities to community groups and also offer or expand a community education program?

( ) Do you respond promptly to telephone calls from the media?

( ) Do you make sure that your external communication program is ongoing and effective?

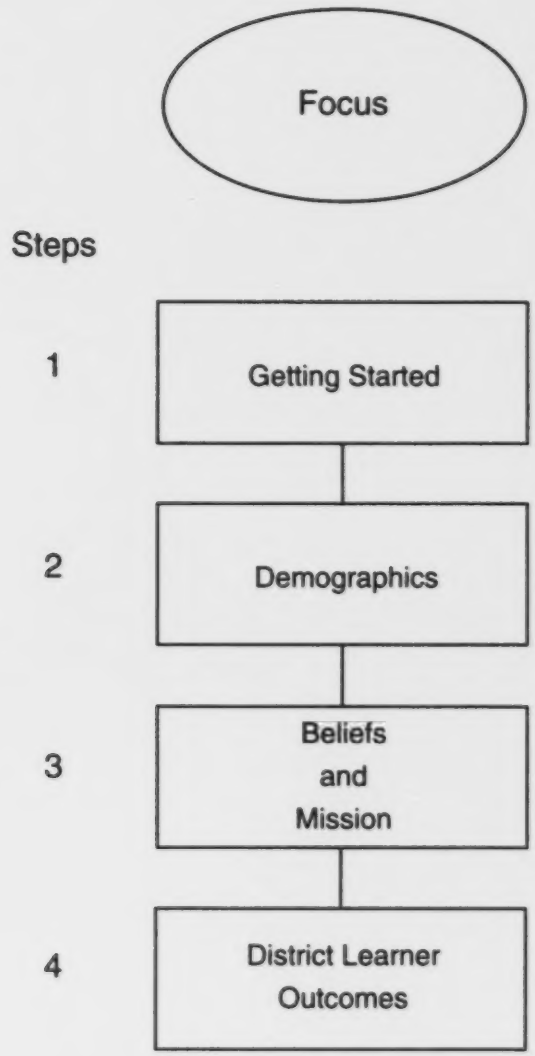
( ) Do you establish PR goals, objectives and plans for each year to communicate internally in the district?

( ) Do you provide leadership to the staff, instilling a belief that public relations is every employee's business?

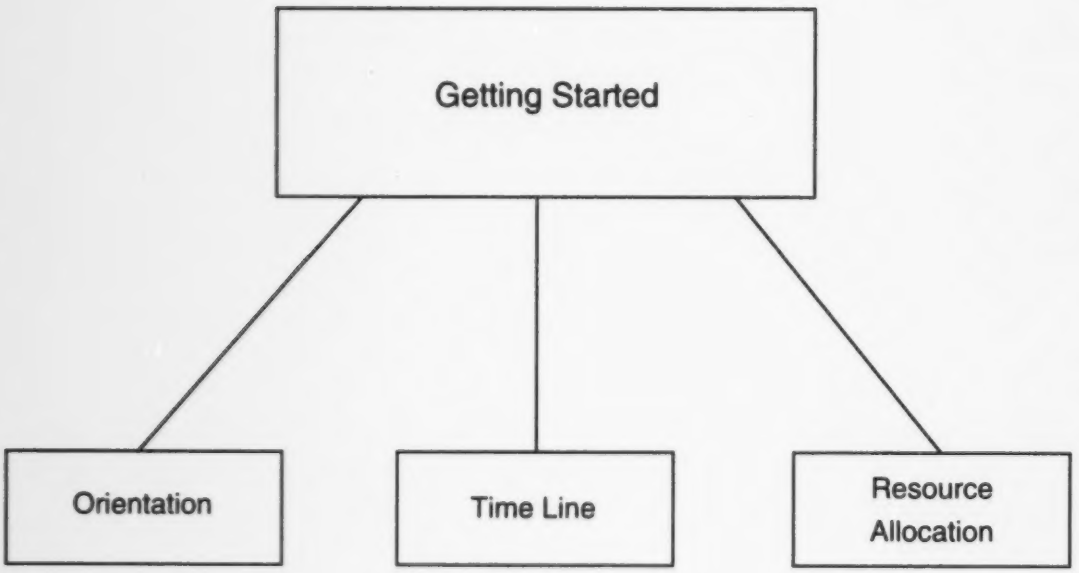
School District Improvement Planning Process

Stage B — Focus

"Where does the district want to go"



Stage B
Step 1



Step 1 — Getting Started

Orientation

Those who are involved in the process of school improvement planning based on effective schools research need to remember that the ultimate purpose of such involvement is to make an impact on student outcomes by changing the culture of the school and school district and, ultimately, the transactions with students. This approach to educational change is built upon three key beliefs:

1. Districts, schools, and individuals have the capacity for self-renewal and redirection.
2. Each district and school within that district has a unique culture embodied in the norms, beliefs, and attitudes of its constituents.
3. If lasting change is to occur, the culture itself must be shaped to support that change.

Since individuals in the school and school community are the carriers of the culture, they all need to be informed and involved in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of school improvement efforts designed to change that culture.

Participants in orientation

As Ron Edmonds stated so concisely, "There are no unimportant adults in the life of a child." Therefore, school and community groups should have the opportunity to become familiar with the research and the school improvement planning process. Robert Sudlow, retired assistant superintendent, Spencerport (New York) Central Schools, has noted that when an orientation is well orchestrated, the level of anxiety over change should diminish. "The 'mystique' which surrounds taking research to practice will dissipate." He goes on to note that as educators know that changes will

be expected of them, they realize "that there will also be changes in policies, and the organizational structure deemed necessary to implement and support school improvement. A common goal elicits a common bond. . . . Above all, a single common purpose unites the school—the overarching goal of increasing the level and altering the distribution of student outcomes." (cited in Lezotte and Jacoby, p. 21)

School board. School board members should understand the major findings of effective schools research and its possible implications for their district. It's critical that this base of common language and understandings be developed so that questions and concerns can be addressed.

Awareness opportunities could be offered jointly to community representatives, administrators, teacher union representatives, nonteaching staff representatives and parents. One school district chose to turn its awareness sessions into study sessions. The school board, community representatives, and administrators took a considerable length of time (about one year) learning all they could about effective schools. This group formed study teams and had the responsibility of sharing the new learnings with each other. Only after they were satisfied with the extent of their knowledge and felt comfortable with the planning process was this information presented to staff, students, and others.

Staff. The staff orientation begins the "ownership" process, which is essential to the ultimate success of any school improvement effort. The orientation should include an overview of the process and provide opportunities for staff to ask questions, discuss the process, and get clarification of their roles and responsibilities. This orientation should identify potential "payoffs" to the school staff and students relative to the effort involved. It should also address the various ways the district will demonstrate its commitment to the process.

Students. All students should be informed of the process and its implications for them, and students should be made aware of the value of their input. Students in upper elementary, middle and high schools could also be selected to participate on the district improvement planning team. At the secondary level, there are several ways in which districts have involved their students. One way is to have student representation on the district school improvement team. A second strategy is to have students form a student school improvement team and have one or two staff members from the district team serve as a link to the two groups. A third strategy is simply to survey students periodically, regarding their perceptions of the strengths and needs of their school and district.

Parents and community. Research indicates that strong home-school relations and parent-teacher cooperation can have a positive impact on student outcomes. Yet, of all the variables, the area of home-school relations is one that educators are often reluctant to confront. The first step in strengthening home-school relations and involving parents is to provide parents with an orientation to the school effectiveness process. Parents need to be aware that the school is undertaking the challenging task of improving itself. They need to know in which areas the improvement will occur, how it will take place, and the roles and responsibilities of various members of the school community.

Some schools elect to have parents represented on the district improvement team at the initiation of the process. Others prefer, at least during the first year, to have the actual working meetings only for faculty, while keeping parents aware of all activities and findings. The decision of whether or not to involve parents actively as team members will be dictated by past practices, community politics, and staff consensus. No matter how the district chooses to begin, the long-term goal should be to incorporate parents as full partners in the improvement process.

Nonteaching staff. Cafeteria workers, bus drivers, school secretaries, etc., all play a vital role in the improvement activities of a school and district. They are often a critical link to the community and have direct contact with many students. Every effort should be made to provide either a special orientation or to include the nonteaching staff in the staff orientation.

Suggested orientation content

- **An overview of effective schools research:** To establish the credibility of the research, point out that the research on effective schools is practitioner based and comes from observations of real classrooms and schools. Also, since the research is based on observations in schools, it has practical and immediate application to classrooms and to the school as a whole.
- **Presentation steps and stages of the school improvement planning process:** It is often helpful to have an outline of the whole planning process so that everyone can see the "big picture" that describes where they are going and how they are going to get there. Each of the steps and stages of the planning process should be discussed, with adequate time provided for questions and concerns.
- **Discussion of the time needed to develop an effective schools process and carry out the resulting improvement plan:** It should be understood that this process is not offered as a quick fix. Increased student achievement, as well as other outcomes, may take several years to be observable on some measurement instruments. While some additional time may be required in the planning stages, the overall focus of the process is to help the entire staff work "smarter, not harder."
- **Examination of relationship between the effective schools planning process and any related state "initiatives" or "mandates":** Staff need to

know how their state requirements and the planning process mesh. The similarities and differences should be clearly delineated. It is critical that this issue be addressed early in the process so staff will realize they will not be involved in two or three separate and unrelated processes. Secondary schools also should determine the similarities between the planning process and the components of their accreditation process.

Opportunities for professional growth and development are most important. While the goal of school improvement is to improve student outcomes, people are more likely to want to become involved if they see clear benefits for themselves as well as their students.

- **After an initial overview, there should be time for discussion of the implications of this approach to school change:** Be aware that the time needed for discussion seems to be greater at the secondary level and in schools with a large number of staff. Experience has shown that after an initial orientation for the entire staff, numerous follow-up meetings with small groups, (i.e., individual departments, curriculum committees, or planning groups) may be necessary to address individual concerns and to secure staff commitment to the process. It is not unusual for this readiness phase to take several months.

Time Line

It is suggested that a time line be developed which addresses the various components of the planning process. Not only does a time line serve to keep the process moving forward but it is also a reminder of the complexity of planning for change.

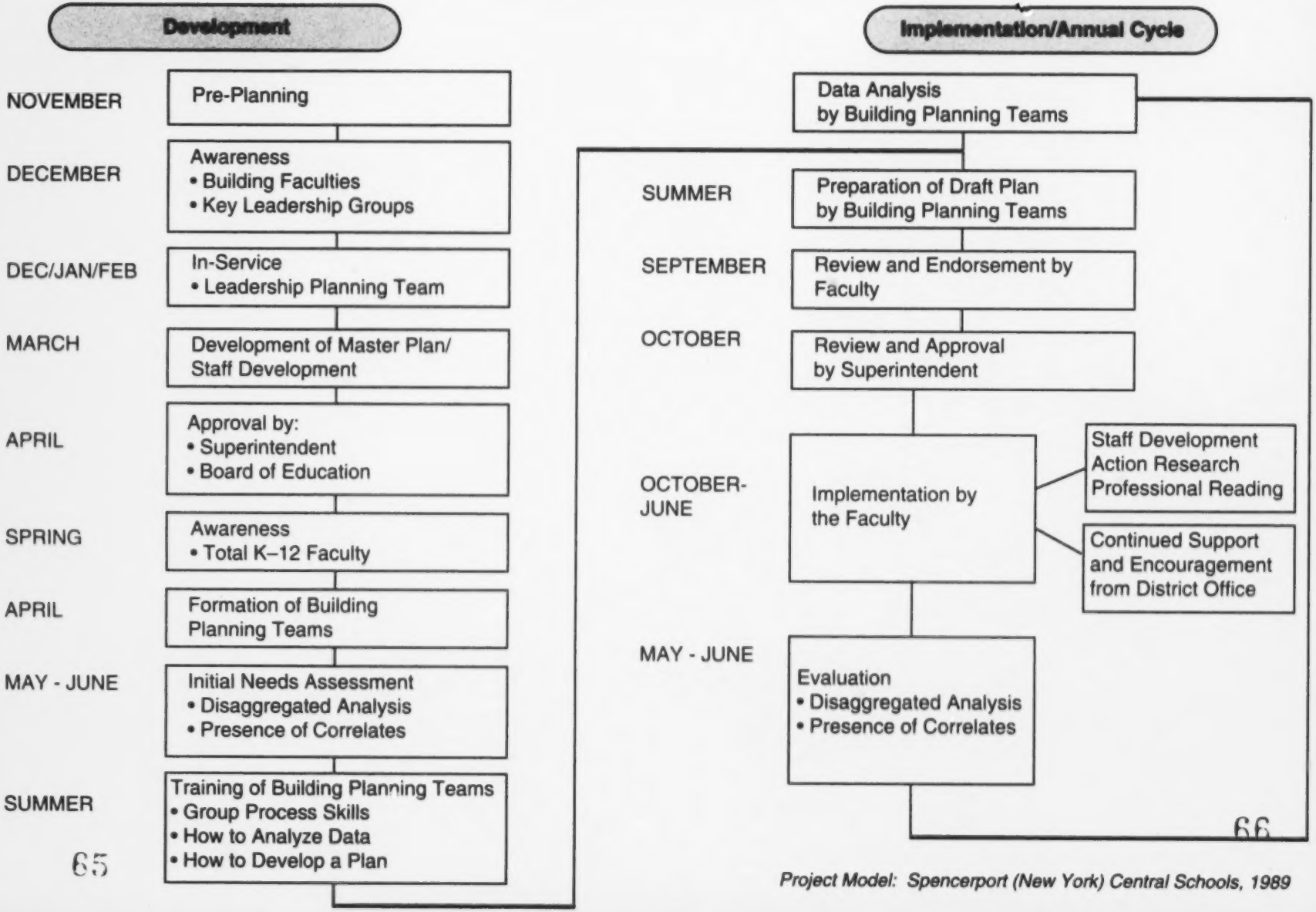
The development of a time line will be influenced of necessity by district schedules, availability of resources, and local politics. Therefore, time lines will vary from district to district. The following are examples of time lines developed by district planning teams:

School Improvement Process
Time Line

		First Year 19__ to 19__						Second Year 19__ to 19__		
District										
					Building					
Create Vision Statement	Generate Awareness	Select Dist. Team	Develop Mission	Assess Needs	Select Bldg. Team	Develop Mission	Select Bldg. Goals	Implement	Evaluate	Analyze
Envision the ideal school district	• Staff • Board • Comm-unity	Needs: 1. Lang. 2. Place 3. Time	Plan-ning with team	Pres-ence or absence of corre-lates	Needs: 1. Lang. 2. Place 3. Time	Planning with staff	Needs Assess. Info... Specific plan for school improv.	Plan (s) put into action	Test data: standard criterioned Disaggre-gated data	Relationship to correlates... Necessary adjustments in bldg. plans

Adapted from Mt. Pleasant (Michigan) Schools

Thomasville City Schools, North Carolina
Effective Schools Project



Project Model: Spencerport (New York) Central Schools, 1989

Resource Allocation

Eaker, Ranells, and DuFour point out:

> Resource allocation is an essential aspect of planning. People typically spend their time and money on things they value most. The same is true with a school district. If improving the schooling practices in a district is, in fact, a core value, then resources must be provided to ensure the success of improvement efforts. Resource allocation cannot be left to chance; it must be worked into the budget at the outset of the process. Furthermore, the resources must be adequate if school improvement is truly important. If a district asks staff members to work on the school improvement process beyond the regularly scheduled day without compensation, it sends a clear message of the little regard it holds for that process. Teacher efforts in the process should be recognized, appreciated, and compensated. If resources cannot be found, perhaps school improvement is not viewed as valuable. (1991, p. 9)

When a change process of the magnitude of school improvement is undertaken at the district level, certain needs will arise which have a direct impact on the success of the process. These needs should be identified and discussed at the start of the planning process so that there will be no major surprises later on. Naturally, these needs will vary from district to district.

Released time. If school improvement is a priority, the district should be prepared to express its commitment by providing premium time for planning. It is difficult for even the most dedicated person to work a half day or full day and then have either the energy or desire to think and plan creatively. Therefore, it is preferable to allocate released time for the district planning meetings whenever possible.

One of the major requirements for any school improvement effort involves access to time. Middle Cities Educational Association has charted this concisely, as shown below:

Support Needed
for School Improvement

Access to	**T**	TIME/Opportunity to Plan/Collaborate
	I	INFORMATION about Research and Best Practices
	M	MEASUREMENTS of Student Progress (Data)
	E	ESSENTIAL CURRICULUM Stated in Terms of Outcomes Expected for All Students

Middle Cities Education Association
Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan

Secretarial assistance. Extra typing of agenda, minutes, reports, etc., will be necessary. There will be more telephone calls made and received as well as a need for additional supplies such as paper, pencils, notebooks and overhead transparencies.

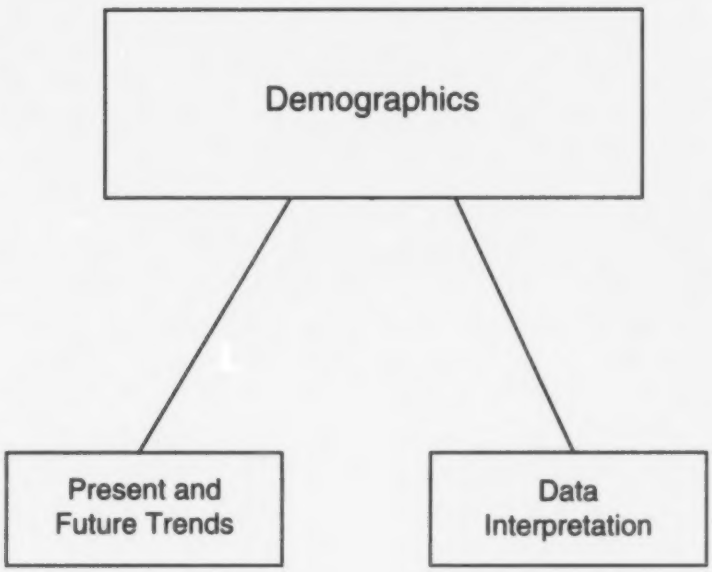
Printing and copying. Expect to distribute a variety of materials to all staff as well as planning team members.

Meeting/conference costs. It may be necessary for some team members to travel outside the district in order to obtain needed information or to observe the implementation of certain educational strategies.

Supplemental resources. Subscriptions, research findings, education journal reprints, current topical books, and videos, etc., should be provided in order to keep everyone informed.

Ambiance. The creature comforts that contribute to a pleasant working atmosphere need to be considered. At times it may be desirable to provide refreshments, notebooks, awards, off-site meeting locations, etc.

Stage B
Step 2



Step 2 — Demographics

Present and Future Trends

Is your community growing, remaining stable, or declining in size? What are the student trends, staffing trends, and some of the economic trends in which the district operates?

Will the school district have the same look five years from now? Ten years from now? If your answer is "no," in what way will it be different?

Do the graduates have the knowledge and skills to function adequately in today's world? What about in the world of tomorrow?

Importance

Demographic information provides baseline data from which it is possible to make more realistic projections concerning staff development, curriculum, staff and budget needs. Scanning the environment can also be a valuable first step in the dialogue leading to developing or revisiting the district mission and educational goals or outcomes.

It is important to know what is happening in the United States, your state and your district. As Harold Hodgkinson (1988) points out, "as with a food chain, changes at one level . . . will have direct and predictable consequences for other levels in the chain."

It is suggested that the district plan address the demographics of the school district. From our experience, we have found that the people who work in a district often are unaware of changing trends in their own community. Worse than not

having the facts is having inaccurate information. We tend to make decisions based on the available information we have—right or wrong.

Patricia L. Best has noted: "The educator/strategic planner is a futurist in the sense that he or she believes that the future of education is what we make of it. According to William Cook of Cambridge Management Company, 'the whole purpose of planning is to make decisions about the future before the future either forces the decisions or renders any decisions irrelevant. It is a voluntary commitment to generate rational decisions about the deployment of resources toward recognized goals and priorities. It is the total concentration of the organization's resources on mutually pre-determined measurable outcomes.'" (p. 7)

Facts from an environmental scan of the various educational communities are, more often than not, already available in the district. It may be just a matter of pulling the data together and presenting them in readily understandable charts and graphs. School districts are frequently required to collect local data for various reports to state and other agencies.

National and state data are updated annually and are readily available in publications from the U.S. Department of Education, Educational Testing Service, and the American School Board Journal. In addition, the annual Gallup Poll presents updated information on the state of educational matters at the national level. Harold Hodgkinson, of the American Council on Education, makes studies and issues reports on the current status and projected trends of various states and their educational systems.

Data Interpretation

Waterman (1990) reminds us that we live in a society that is data rich and information poor. He goes on to suggest that "data are not information; translating fact to understanding means relating data to something you already know and can visualize." (p. 48)

Keating and Oakes (1988) have provided some disquieting information to keep in mind when you look at your data:

- The quality of education children receive can be predicted—to a considerable degree—by their race. Black, Hispanic and other non-Asian minorities typically will not receive equal or high-quality opportunities in schools.

- The quality of education a child receives can be predicted—to a considerable degree—by their *parents' income*, (italics added). Children from poorer families typically will not receive equal or high-quality opportunities in schools.

- The quality of education children receive can be predicted—to a considerable degree—by his or her *gender*, (italics added). Girls, typically will not receive equal or high-quality opportunities in schools in subjects like science, mathematics and technology.

- The quality of education children receive can be predicted—to a considerable degree—by the presence or absence of physically or socially debilitating *handicaps* (italics added). Those children with individual vulnerabilities and social disadvantages will typically not receive equal or high-quality opportunities in school. (p. 3)

Suggested demographic data

The following outline is designed to suggest areas in which demographic information may aid in the process of district planning. It is recommended that the district team include *only* the data which will be most beneficial.

I. National and State Trends and Projections

- A. Population
- B. Race/Ethnicity
- C. Socioeconomic Status
- D. Education Matters

II. Community Trends and Projections

- A. History
- B. Population(s)
- C. Race/Ethnicity
- D. Size
- E. Education Attainment
- F. Socioeconomic Status
- G. Housing Trends
- H. Health Issues

III. Economic Trends and Projections

- A. School Finance
- B. Community Tax Base
- C. Employment/Unemployment
- D. Welfare Eligibility

IV. Staffing Trends and Projections

- A. Gender/Race Ethnicity
- B. Years of Service
- C. Certification Patterns
- D. Retirement Projections
- E. Salary Trends
- F. Degree Profile
- G. Staff-Student Ratio

V. Student Trends and Projections

A. Enrollment

B. Gender/Race/Ethnicity

C. Graduates

D. Outcomes—Academic and Non-Academic

E. SEV per student

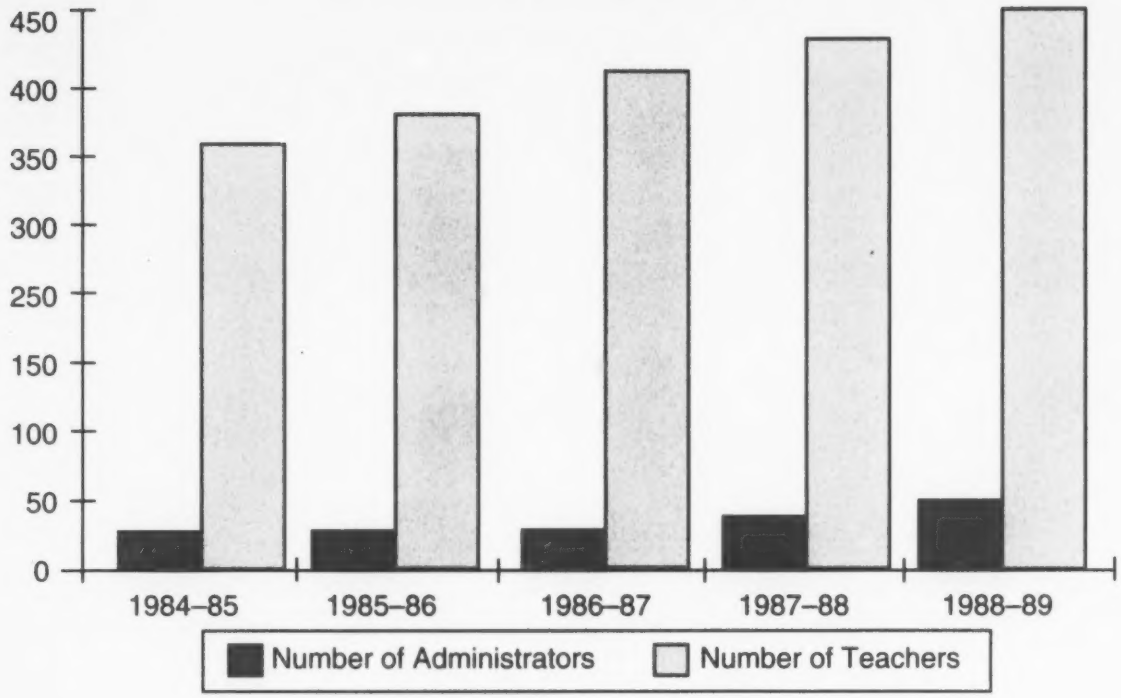
F. Curriculum Offerings

G. Dropouts and Retentions

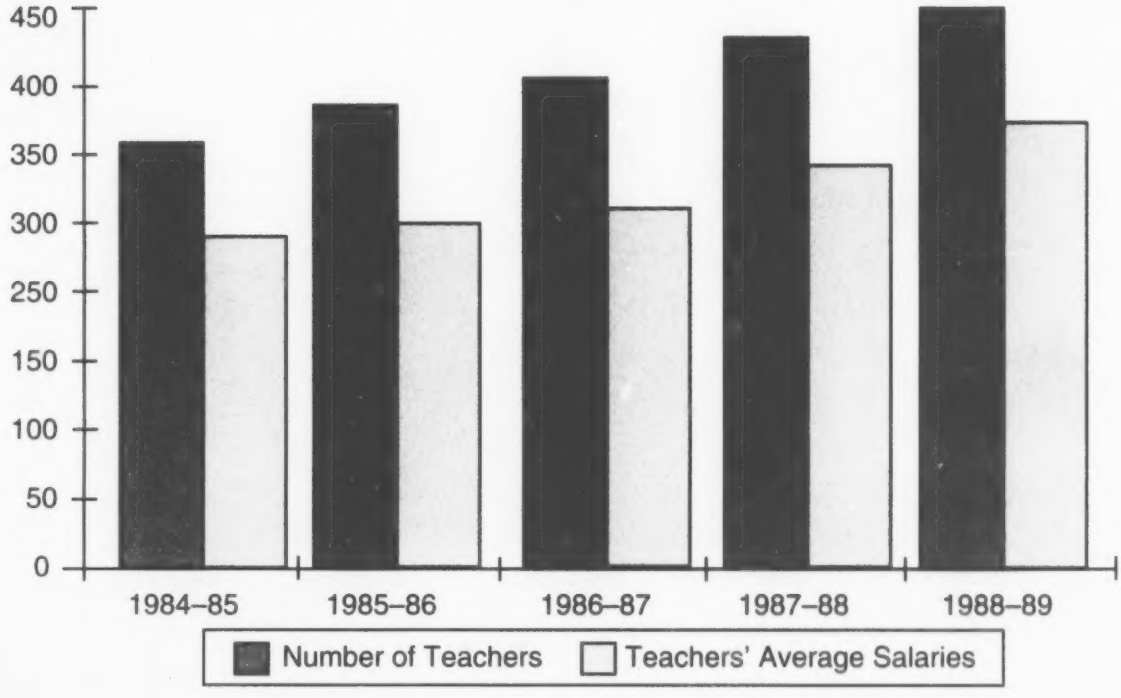
H. Special Services

Examples from district plans. The following examples are taken from district school improvement plans and are used to show the variety of ways that data can be presented. Whether the data appear in the form of a chart, graph, paragraph, etc., *it is most important that the data be easily interpreted and understood by a variety of stakeholder groups.* The goal in presenting such data is to allow those who review it to attach personal meaning to the data. This makes the ownership of a need for change and support for the proposed changes more likely.

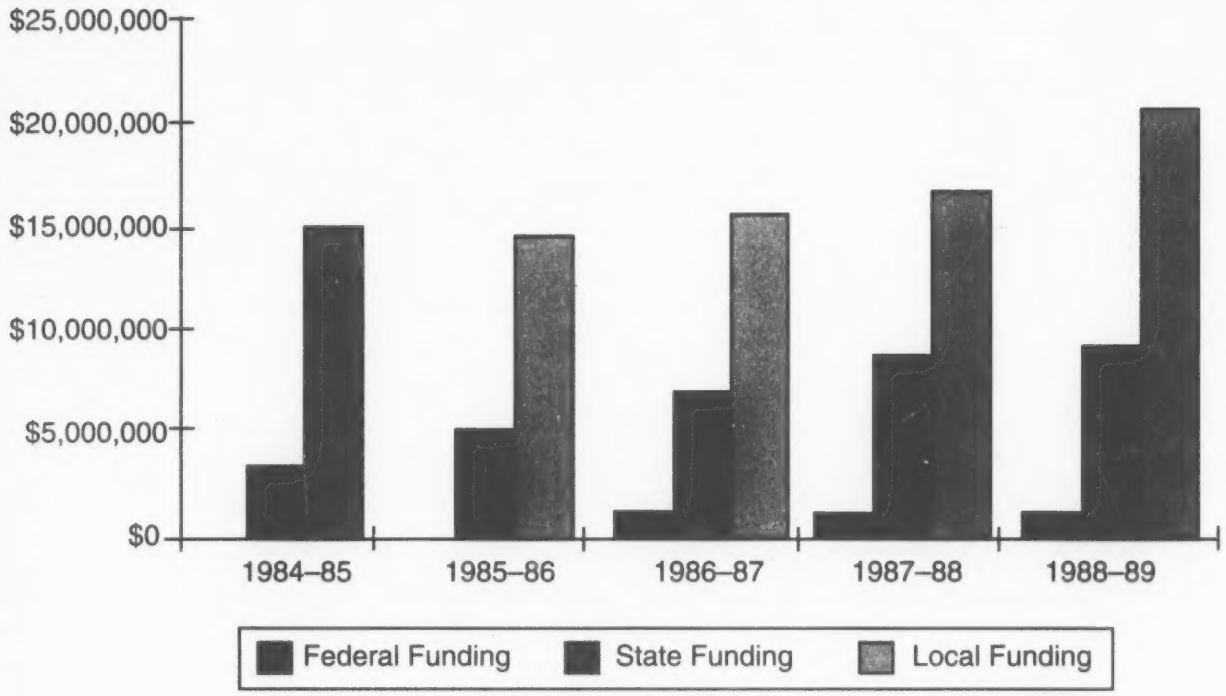
Number of District Employees



Average Salaries



District Funding Sources



District Student-Staff Ratio

Mytown Schools Student-Staff Ratio

Mytown Student Count	Number of Professional Staff (Excluding Administration)	Student-Staff Ratio
2502	121.0	20.67 to 1

District Student Projections

Ten Year Enrollments—Mytown County Schools

SCHOOL	81-82	82-83	83-84	84-85	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89	89-90	90-91	91-92	92-93
Camden	674	654	649	645	670	690	724	728	706	723	721	724
Hills	2355	2311	2320	2385	2399	2406	2404	2431	2459	2502	2510	2519
Jonesdale	1095	1128	1087	1124	1142	1196	1188	1157	1161	1162	1160	1165
Litchie	673	659	683	619	616	582	595	595	536	567	551	530
Adams	701	685	638	658	631	652	631	639	643	586	577	567
Pitchford	703	712	696	673	705	728	723	763	790	820	819	821
Maple	984	949	926	873	898	902	930	945	929	949	935	945
Fisher	743	483	493	482	478	489	458	469	481	503	499	586

District History

The first "Mytown" school was started in 1838, when a log schoolhouse was erected on the north side of Division Street near Abbott Street. A new school was constructed in the spring of 1841. The one story building was located on the north side of Clio Road just east of the railroad tracks. Miss Sarah L. Jones was the first teacher, starting with six children who lived nearby.

In 1847 a new building was erected on the courthouse square. The building was of native stone and two stories in height. On the first floor there was a primary room and an intermediate room. On the second floor were classrooms, a cloak room and an assembly room. Reverend James Swarthout was employed as the principal at an annual salary of $500.

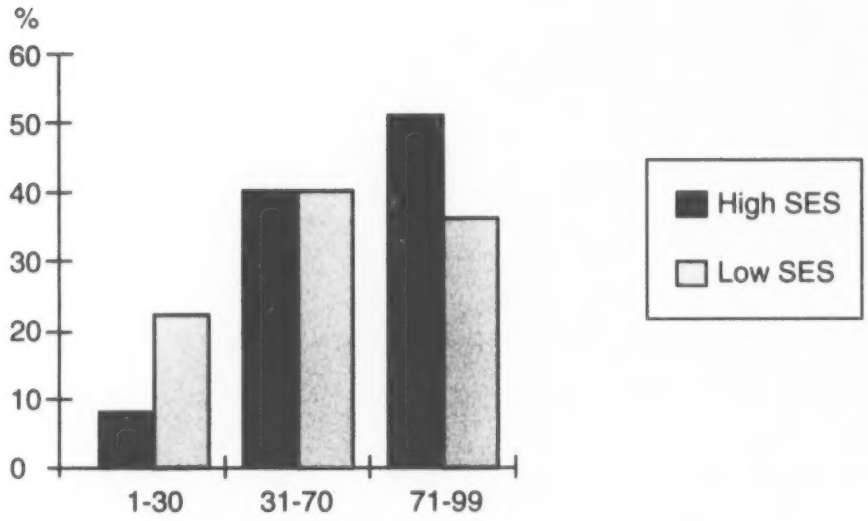
Between 1860 and 1862 four Primary Schools were built in four city wards. In 1868 the Central or Union School was built on Riverview Street to accommodate five hundred pupils and contained three grades each in Primary, Intermediate, Grammar and High School Departments.

Mytown City Schools were organized in 1941 in the village of Mytown, Collette Township. When the city was incorporated as a fourth-class city, the district formerly known as District #3 became known as School District #1 of the City of Mytown.

Mytown School Buildings:

Jones Intermediate School	1929
Babcock Elementary	1936
Crown Elementary	1939
Green Elementary	1953
High School	1960

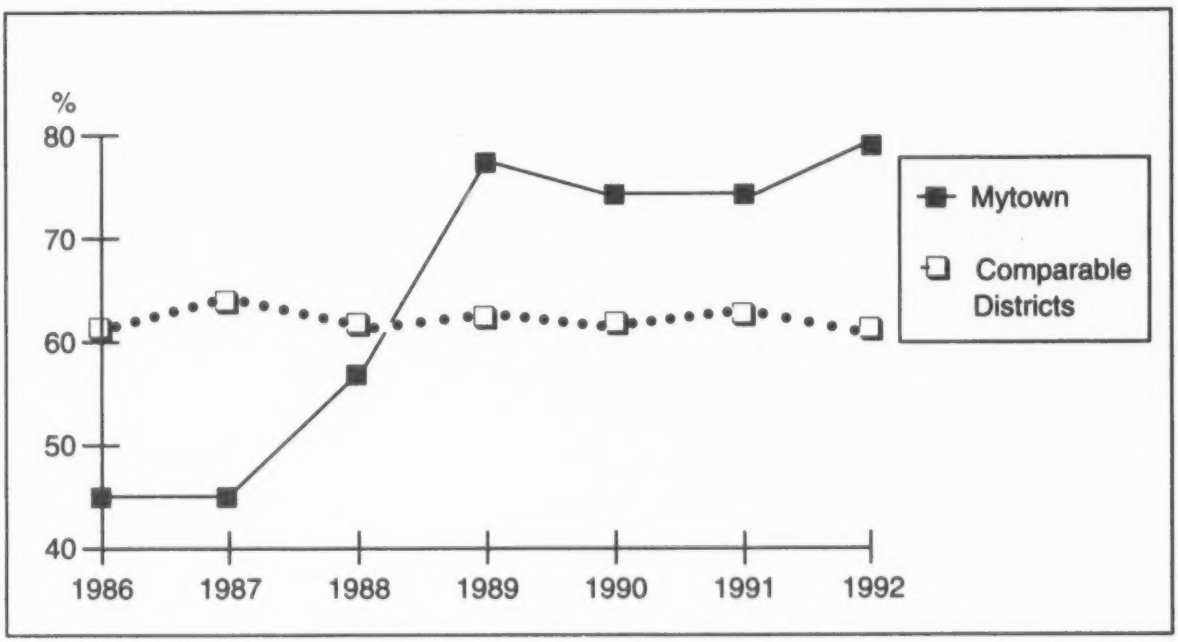
Test Scores by Socioeconomic Status



Percentiles
Language Arts—Grade 7
S.R.A.

	High SES		LOW SES	
Percentile	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
1-30	20	8%	19	23%
31-70	100	40%	32	40%
71-99	130	52%	30	37%

Comprehensive English (Grades 9–11) Regents Exam
Percent of Grade Enrollment Passing



English

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Mytown	45	45	58	78	76.4	76.4	79.1
Comparable Districts	61.2	65.8	62.3	62.7	61.8	63.6	61.3

National Trends

These data are most useful when compared with comparable district data.

National standards. Would you favor or oppose requiring the public schools in this community to conform to national achievement standards and goals?

Favor %		Oppose %		Don't Know %	
1991	1989	1991	1989	1991	1989
81	70	12	19	7	11

Attitude Survey. *Phi Delta Kappan* September 1991

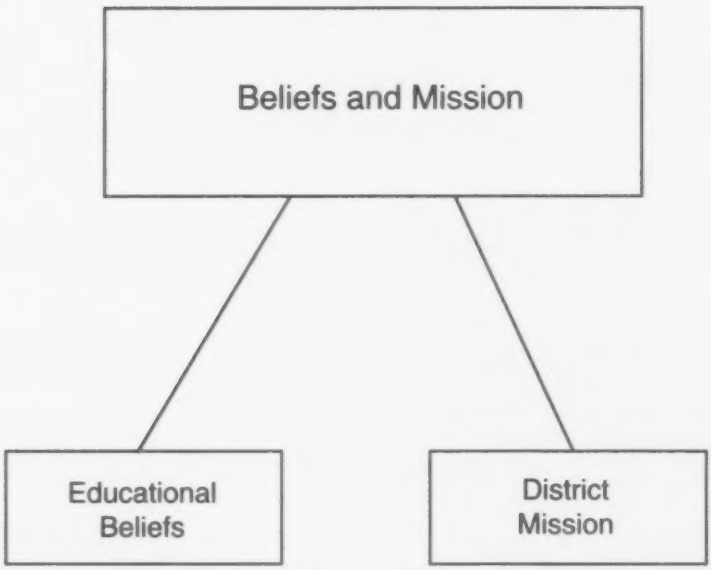
National tests. Would you favor or oppose requiring the public schools in this community to use standardized national tests to measure the academic achievement of students?

Favor %		Oppose %		Don't Know %	
1991	1989	1991	1989	1991	1989
81	70	12	19	7	11

Attitude Survey. *Phi Delta Kappan* September 1991

Stage B

Step 3



Step 3 — Beliefs and Mission

Educational Beliefs

The development of a common understanding of the shared beliefs of the school district is often the first formal school improvement activity that includes input from the school board, community, parents and teaching and nonteaching staff. The process sets the stage for the future direction of school improvement at the district level.

This process is most valuable and productive if conducted so that opinions can be verbally expressed and heard by others, rather than relying on a checklist or other printed response. An open invitation in a structured setting to share what one believes about teaching for learning is a unique opportunity for educational dialogue from interested people with varied backgrounds.

One district conducted a type of community forum by inviting representatives from the community, school board, teaching and nonteaching staff, parents, non-parents, retirees and students. After an examination and discussion of examples of beliefs from other districts, it was the responsibility of the group to generate a list of beliefs about teaching and learning for the district. How they went about this task is explained below:

Process to determine educational beliefs

1. Predetermine composition of groups so there will be a community mix.
2. Color code name tags according to group assignment.
3. Assign one district school improvement team member to each group to act as facilitator/recorder.
4. Provide large chart paper and marking pens to each group.
5. Following the rules of brainstorming, each group generates a list of statements by responding to the following question: "What do you believe about teaching and learning?" (It is often helpful to provide each person with a list of statements to use as examples and to stimulate thinking.)
6. By consensus, the group agrees on two or three statements or beliefs and expresses them in sentence format.
7. District team members compile the lists and present all the beliefs to the total group.
8. The list is typed the next day and sent to all who participated with the request to select ten beliefs that reflect their thinking and are appropriate for the school district.
9. Two rounds of mailing and responding resulted in a list of beliefs that are found acceptable.

   These beliefs were the foundation of a district mission statement which was created using a similar format (see p. 84).

The following are statements of beliefs:

- all students are capable of success in mastering instructional objectives of the curriculum, regardless of race, national origin, socio-economic status or innate ability to learn.
- faculty and administration control the variables for success based on their beliefs and attitudes regarding the nature of the learner, the teaching profession and instructional practices in the classroom.
- success in learning causes the improvement of a student's self-concept and increases the likelihood of further learning.
- quality programs and equal opportunity for all students is the foundation upon which all programs and practices are built.

Achievement Profile 1990–91
Adams County School District 14
Commerce City, Colorado

- The primary mission of the school is teaching for learning for all.
- There is room for improvement in every school.
- The potential for improvement already resides in each school.
- There are no unimportant adults in the school.
- School improvement is an ongoing process.
- Teachers and administrators are committed to doing their best in their given situations.
- People who are working in our schools are in the best position to improve student outcomes.
- There are only two kinds of schools — improving schools and declining schools.
- Teachers create learning experiences.
- Success is judged on the basis of outcomes.
- The evidence of schooi effectiveness can be found in student outcomes.

Wyoming (Michigan) Public Schools

Hillsdale Community Schools
Hillsdale, Michigan

Beliefs That Guide Us

Education is a Shared Responsibility —achievement requires the commitment and participation of staff, students, family and community.

All Students Can Learn — all students have potential that can be developed.

Rates of Learning Vary — the time required for mastery has no bearing on the value of the learner.

All Students Have Unique Skills and Talents — individual abilities must be identified and nurtured.

High Self-Esteem Enhances Success — people develop best through sincere praise and validation.

School Climate Contributes to Achievement — learning occurs best in an environment of mutual respect.

High Expectations for Success Must be the Norm — failure only occurs when one stops trying.

Trust is Vital — trust bonds staff, students, family and community.

Cooperation is Essential — learning experiences must encourage and teach skills which develop a cooperative attitude.

Optimism is Critical — optimism about people, education and the future serves all of us best.

District Mission

In initiating any improvement process, success is linked to the degree to which one can clearly and succinctly specify the end result and organize resources to accomplish that result. Virtually all the current books on leadership and change in both the public and private sector specify that a clear and pervasive sense of mission is a critical component of a successful effort.

School districts are complex organizations, and the importance of their having a clear and focused mission cannot be overemphasized. Mission is the centering piece; the quest toward which school improvement efforts are being directed. It is the driving force that propels a district toward effectiveness. Basically, school improvement based on effective schools research advocates a clear and focused mission that describes explicitly the expectations that the district has for student outcomes. Although it can and should be stated in many different ways, in essence the mission should emphasize that *all students in a district are capable of achieving mastery in all areas of the curriculum and that the teachers and administrators accept responsibility for making this a reality.*

Most districts have developed a mission statement. However, this statement may need to be dusted off and revisited. The mission of a district should not be viewed simply as a laminated poster on the wall. The mission is the centering piece for the school district. It is a concise declaration of what the district believes about its purpose or reason for existence. The district mission is the foundation of the district school improvement plan, just as the building mission provides the foundation of the building plan. Districts should be sure that the existence of a mission statement is not the end of the process. The leaders need to take steps to be sure that the schools and the school system develop a sense of mission that all children can learn.

Creating a district mission

District missions will vary in their wording and format. However, each mission should embody the answers to these questions:

1. What will the district do?
2. Who will benefit?
3. What are the expected behaviors or outcomes?
4. Who is responsible?

It is important to remember that *the greatest value in creating a mission statement comes from the staff, parent, community, and student discussions surrounding its development.* These discussions are concerned with the basic beliefs regarding learning for all. The mission statement provides the basis for identifying the discrepancies between what the district is like now and what it wants to be like in the future.

The following examples are statements of mission from several school districts:

Mission Statement

Wyoming Public Schools are committed to excellence in teaching and learning for all students. We will provide effective instructional leadership, responsible fiscal management, and quality learning environments which improve student outcomes. Wyoming Public Schools hold high expectations for students and staff. We share with our community the responsibility for the education of all students so that they will be prepared to live and work in a rapidly changing world.

Wyoming (Michigan) Public Schools, p. 48

District Vision

The South Redford School District has a vision of the graduates of its educational system as individuals who have developed the necessary attributes that will enable them to become happy and successful adults.

* * * * * * * * *

District Mission Statement

The staff of the South Redford School District, believing that every student can learn and that a safe and orderly environment is important to that process, will teach academic, cultural, social, physical, organizational, and problem-solving skills. This staff will assist students in achieving their maximum potential, will help students develop positive attitudes and high self-esteem, and will prepare students to be happy, successful, and responsible individuals.

South Redford (Michigan) Public Schools

Revisiting and/or rewording the district mission

The district school improvement team may decide that the existing district mission needs to be reexamined. One district went about this task by distributing the mission to the community and staff with three questions to be answered. A copy of this mission statement proposal appears below:

Anycity District School Improvement Committee
Mission Statement Proposal
March 8, 1992

Mission Statement

The School District of Anycity believes that all students can learn mastery of basic skills. It is the responsibility of school employees to teach all students the specified curriculum at each grade level and to educate all students to their highest level of academic performance. Our mission is to allow each individual student to make a positive contribution to our democratic society.

IN ANYCITY, ALL STUDENTS WILL LEARN

The above district mission was written and approved by staff and community in 1987. Because we are now involved in a district-wide school improvement planning process, one of our first steps is to "revisit" the mission.

Please read the mission and then answer the following questions:

I like the words: _____

_____

I would like to see the words that follow changed _____

_____

I offer this version of a mission statement to be considered: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please circle your response.

I like the mission just as it is. Please don't change a word.

YES NO

_____ _____
Name (optional) Date

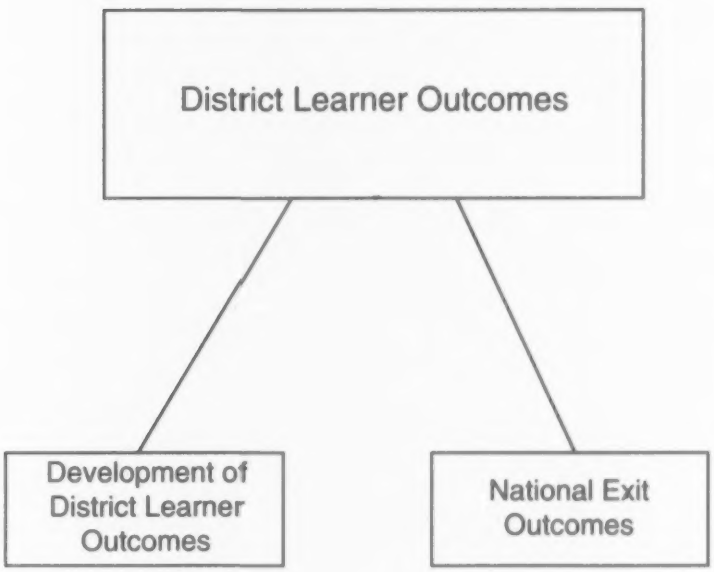
Living the mission

The mission must be lived or its creation will just be an educational exercise of limited use. For a mission to be lived, district personnel, policies, and practices must reflect the beliefs about teaching and learning expressed in the mission statement.

Placards and posters of the mission on the wall of the central office are no guarantee that the mission is being lived. However, if a district mission states that students will learn the intended curriculum and the district is providing time and expertise to develop this curriculum, then the district is living its mission.

At one high school, the principal demonstrates at each staff meeting how the mission is lived in her building by giving an example of how she lived the school mission during the past several weeks. Then she encourages teachers to tell how they or their students also lived the mission. A superintendent could do a similar conscious awareness activity at administrative meetings, school board meetings, and community gatherings.

Stage B
Step 4



Step 4 — District Learner Outcomes

Associated with shared beliefs and the statement of mission is an indication of long-range district learner outcomes. These outcomes are the ends toward which the school district addresses its priorities.

It is not unusual for school districts to want to ignore educational outcomes. Publicly stated outcomes that express what the district cares most about implies a level of accountability. However, given the enormity of a school district's responsibility and the scarce resources of time, dollars, and people with which it must operate, it is critical that a declaration be made which serves to center or focus the organization. This declaration needs to be expressed in the form of learner outcomes.

Long-range learner outcomes make the district's mission operational. These broadly stated outcomes provide the framework for the development of more precise learner outcomes in individual programs, courses, and/or grade levels (see Stage D, Step 1).

What does your district expect all students to learn? If you were asked to describe the expected academic, social, and emotional behaviors of students as they leave your district, what would be your answer? Has your district clearly identified the components of a K–12 curriculum?

A component that is critical to the effective schools process addresses the issue of learner outcomes. At the district, building and classroom levels, a declaration of *what is worth learning* must be made.

Many school districts have written what might be described as a statement of curriculum or generalized curriculum statements. These are a necessary beginning. However, few districts have taken the next steps to declare what it is that the district considers essential learnings. These learnings or learner outcomes at the *district* level are often referred to as *exit outcomes*. Exit outcomes become the umbrella under which building staffs identify specific program, course, or grade outcomes.

It is critical that these learner outcomes, after having been identified, will be known by all stakeholder groups—community, parents, K–12 teachers, students, etc. These outcomes are clearly the answer to the question, "What is it that we expect all our students to know?"

Development of District Learner Outcomes

The development of district learner outcomes starts with the district mission and leads to learner outcomes at the classroom level:

Step one: Re-examine district mission

Using the mission as the point of destination or quest, it should be possible to identify *generalized* long-range outcome(s) or expectations for students.

Example A:

> The mission of Alma School District is to ensure that *all* students, regardless of family background, socioeconomic level, or sex, will *achieve mastery of the essential objectives in each subject area or course* (italics added). Each student is encouraged to achieve to his/her highest potential.

Long-range educational outcome

Alma (Michigan) Public Schools

Example B:

> We, the members of the Natrona County School community are committed to *preparing responsible citizens and lifelong learners* (italics added) who value themselves, contribute to their community, and succeed in a changing world.

Long-range educational outcome

Natrona County Schools
Casper, Wyoming

Step Two: Clearly define mastery, as well as other significant terms

In Example A, Alma School District needed to answer clearly two questions: "What do we mean by *mastery*?" and "What are the *essential objectives in each subject area or course*?"

In Example B, Natrona County Schools should also provide answers to the questions: "Describe the academic, social and emotional behaviors of responsible citizens and lifelong learners?" and "How will we know we have met this goal?" or "What will we accept as *evidence* that our students are becoming responsible citizens and lifelong learners?"

The definition of key terms from the mission will require many discussions and input from major stakeholder groups. A clear understanding of these terms is critical. For example, if the word "mastery" has been included in the mission, that word needs to be carefully defined. If, however, mastery is only implied, an explanation must be made which clearly indicates what the district will accept as evidence that the goal(s) have been met.

Note: *Be aware that the concept of mastery may be more important than the definition itself.* In other words, mastery refers to the depth of knowledge required to progress through a school and/or district. This depth of knowledge, or mastery, may differ from district to district. *However, it is essential that the district define mastery.* There should be no confusion or misunderstanding about the definition of this term. (See pp. 104–105 for further discussion and examples of mastery.)

Step Three: Translate the generalized long-range educational outcome(s) into specific district exit outcomes

District exit outcomes are measurable statements of student knowledge or performance which reflect the long-term goals in the mission. The outcomes should be general enough to apply to all areas of the curriculum and all grade levels, but specific enough to clearly communicate what is expected.

Example C:

Students will:

- comprehend what they read
- write and speak with clarity and correctness
- solve mathematical problems
- use scientific facts and principles
- understand past and present cultures
- develop habits which promote physical and emotional well-being
- demonstrate learning and problem solving skills
- show courtesy, respect and concern for others
- assume a productive and responsible role in society

Battle Creek (Michigan) Public Schools, 1989

Example D:

A student:

1. Displays self-esteem as a learner and a person.
2. Exhibits cognitive learning:
   a. Masters essential skills.
   b. Learns on an extended basis.
   c. Progresses from low to high cognitive levels.
3. Possesses process skills:
   a. Solves problems.
   b. Communicates effectively.
   c. Makes decisions in a logical, mature manner.
   d. Demonstrates accountability.
   e. Understands group processes.
4. Learns in a self-directed manner.
5. Shows concern for others.
6. Demonstrates emotional, social, and physical well being.

Alma (Michigan) Public Schools, 1992

Example E:

General Academic Skills

- Demonstrate the ability to use effectively the communication skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening
- Demonstrate the ability to understand and apply basic mathematical functions and principles in real-life problem-solving situations
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the basic principles, concepts, and language of the natural sciences
- Demonstrate a functional level of computer and technological literacy
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the history, geography, government, and economic systems of the United States and other countries

Problem-Solving Skills

- Demonstrate skills in individual and group problem solving and decision making
- Demonstrate the ability to identify and critically analyze problems

Social Literacy and Responsibility

- Demonstrate an understanding of one's rights and responsibilities in a democratic society
- Demonstrate an understanding of the implications of the cultural diversity of this country
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of world cultures
- Demonstrate the knowledge and understanding necessary for environmentally responsible behavior
- Demonstrate an understanding of the arts as an expression of culture and personal creativity

Personal Effectiveness

- Demonstrate the interpersonal skills necessary to be personally and professionally effective
- Demonstrate the ability to develop and implement plans for achieving personal and career goals
- Demonstrate knowledge of effective employment skills
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of maintaining personal emotional and physical health
- Demonstrate an understanding of the personal and economic responsibilities of adulthood
- Demonstrate the skills necessary to be an effective life-long learner

Adams County School District #14
Colorado

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Example F:

Each student develops appropriate attitudes toward, as well as skills and abilities in:

- a common core of knowledge
- creative thinking, reasoning, problem solving, and decision making
- personal, ethical and aesthetic awareness
- effective and responsible use of technology
- life skills
- accessing and processing information
- understanding and applying the principles of democracy
- understanding and applying the principles of economic systems
- lifelong learning

Natrona County Schools
Casper, Wyoming

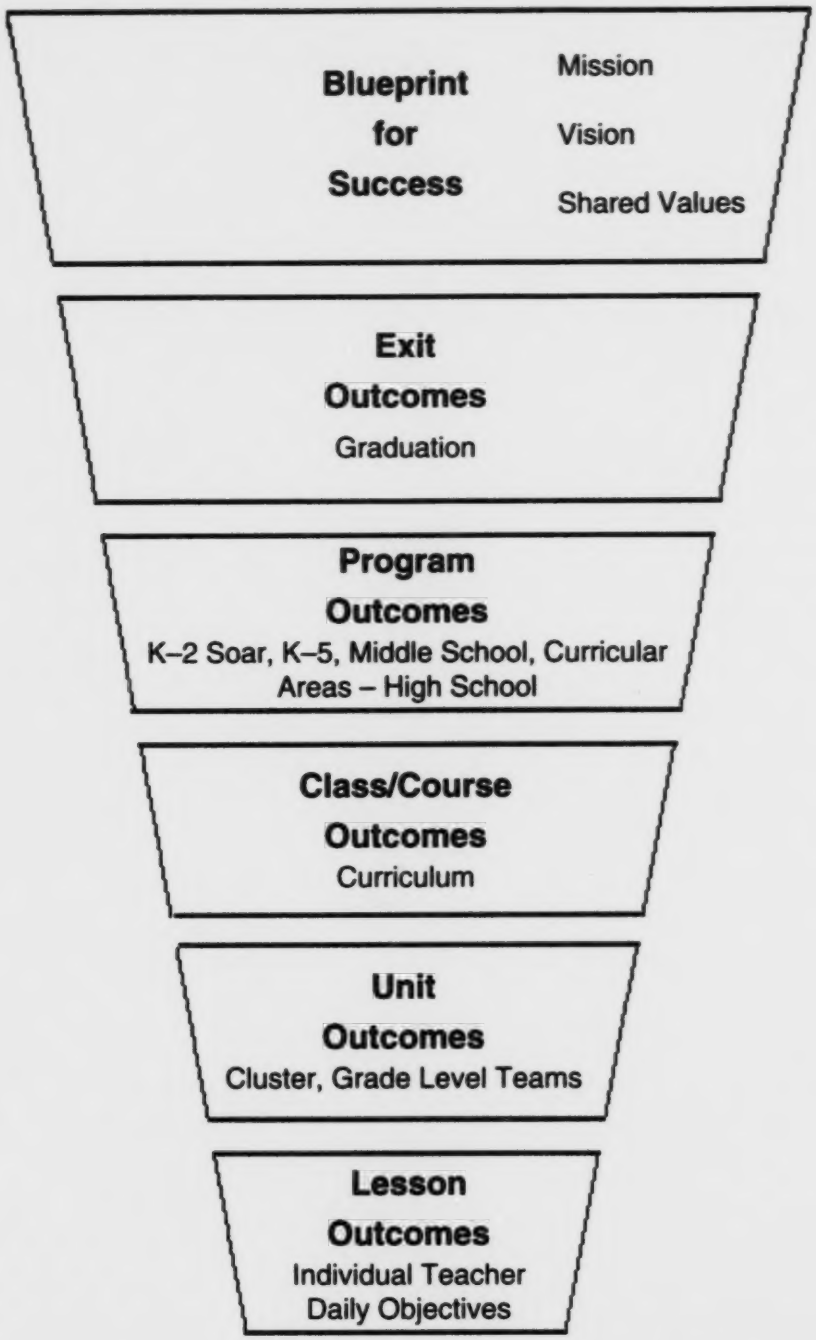
Example G:

ALL Grosse Pointe South Graduates will demonstrate they are:

1. Self-directed learners who, having identified problems of significance, develop strategies and act responsibly to resolve them.
2. Collaborative workers who demonstrate leadership and group skills within diverse settings.
3. Concerned ethical citizens who recognize differing value systems and contribute their knowledge and talents to improve the quality of life in school, community, and world affairs.
4. Quality producers who use any combination of intellectual, artistic, practical and physical skills to produce work that reflects originality, high standards and use of appropriate technology.

Grosse Pointe (Michigan) South High School, 1991

Adams County (Colorado) School District 14 has developed a chart which clearly shows the relationship between the district mission and expected learner outcomes.



Adams County School District 14
Commerce City, Colorado

National Exit Outcomes

At the national level, a report from the U.S. Department of Labor clearly indicates the nature of the changing job market and the subsequent skill needs of workers. The SCANS report (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) claims that the message is clear:

> [G]ood jobs depend on people who can put knowledge to work. New workers must be creative and responsible problem solvers and have the skills and attitudes on which employers can build. Traditional jobs are changing and new jobs are created everyday. High paying but unskilled jobs are disappearing. Employers and employees share the belief that all workplaces must "work smarter." (p. v)

The report draws three major conclusions:

- All American high school students must develop a new set of competencies and foundation skills if they are to enjoy a productive, full, and satisfying life. . . .
- The qualities of high performance that today characterize our most competitive companies must become the standard for the vast majority of our companies, large and small, local and global. . . .
- The nation's schools must be transformed into high-performance organizations in their own right. (p. vi)

SCANS identifies "workplace know-how," which is made up of five competencies and a three-part foundation of skills and personal qualities that are needed for job performance. These include:

Competencies—effective workers can productively use:

- **Resources**—allocating time, money, materials, space, and staff;
- **Interpersonal skills**—working on teams, teaching others, serving customers, leading, negotiating, and working well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds;
- **Information**—acquiring and evaluating data, organizing and maintaining files, interpreting and communicating, and using computers to process information.
- **Systems**—understanding social, organizational, and technological systems, monitoring and correcting performance, and designing or improving systems;
- **Technology**—selecting equipment and tools, applying technology to specific tasks, and maintaining and troubleshooting technologies.

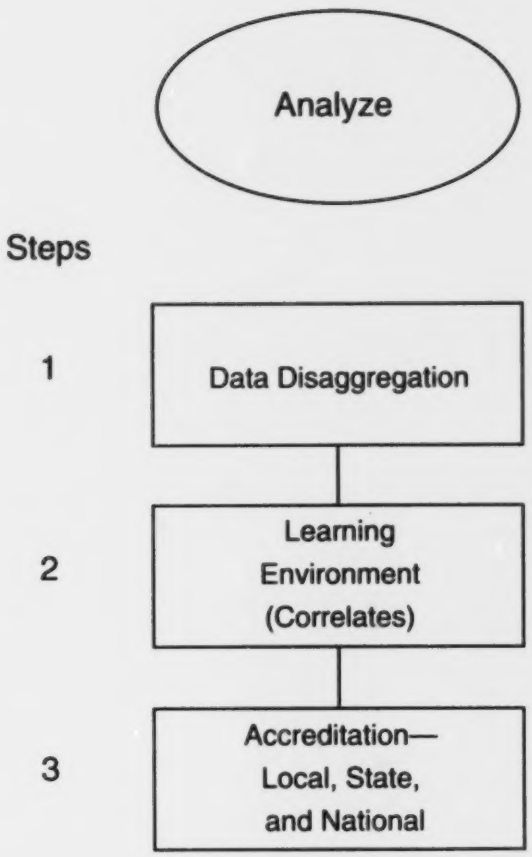
The foundation—competence requires:

- **Basic skills**—reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking, and listening;
- **Thinking skills**—thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, seeing things in the mind's eye, knowing how to learn, and reasoning;
- **Personal qualities**—individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity. (p. vii)

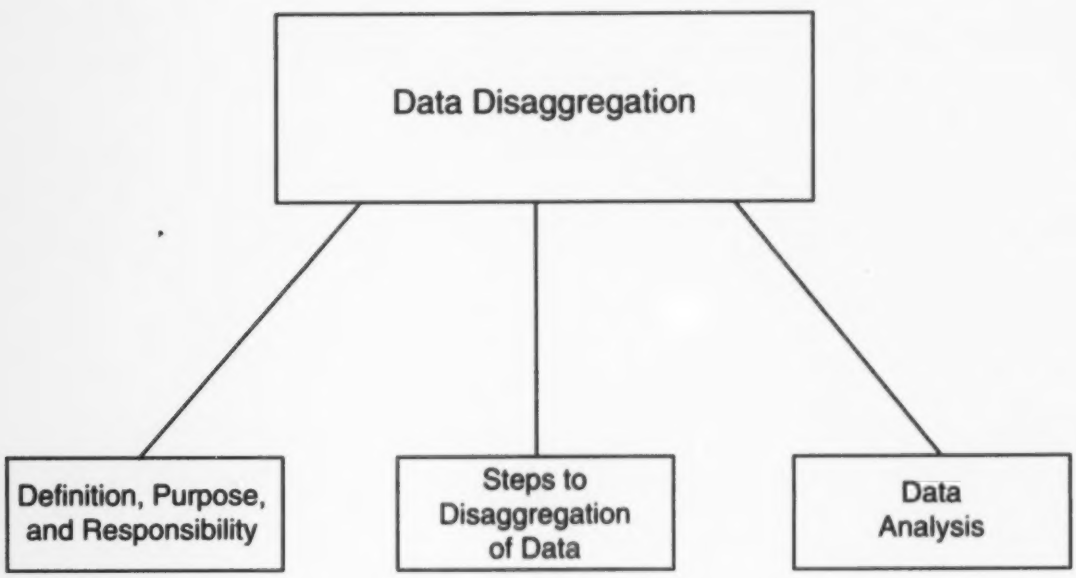
School District Improvement Planning Process

Stage C — Analyze

"Where is the district now?"



Stage C
Step 1



Step 1 — Data Disaggregation

The original research studies by Edmonds, Frederiksen, Brookover, Lezotte, and others sought to dispel the prevailing belief in the '60s and '70s that schools could make no difference in educating children from educationally disadvantaged homes. Thus, in order to find schools which were successful in teaching *all* children, there had to be a way to determine which children came from such homes. Generally, the educationally disadvantaged home tends to be one which is also economically disadvantaged. The researchers determined several variables which were strong predictors of socioeconomic status (SES), such as parents' education, race, and neighborhood value. Subsequent research studies have determined that mother's level of education is the variable which has the highest correlation to social class and is just as valid as the education level of both parents.

Definition, Purpose, and Responsibility

The purpose for disaggregating student outcome data is to give the district and the individual schools a vehicle for evaluating their own effectiveness. The process seeks to identify the percentage of pupils in various subsets who achieve mastery of the essential learnings at each grade level by program, course, school, etc. Through this analysis, a district and building can monitor whether students from all socioeconomic levels, different races, and both genders are mastering the essential student outcomes. *Past experience verifies that such an analysis is one of the most critical steps in helping staff to see the need for change.* This analysis clearly shows whether the curriculum is being *equitably* learned by all students.

It is the responsibility of the school board, superintendent, and central office to make clear from the outset of the school improvement process what indicators are going to be measured and monitored over time. It is critical that the student achievement measures are clearly identified. Using race, gender, and SES, districts have disaggregated additional student outcome indicators such as:

- attendance
- grade distribution
- honors earned
- extra-curricular participation
- truancy
- vandalism
- referrals to office
- graduation rate
- dropout rate
- grade point average
- retentions
- suspensions
- feeder schools
- mobility

These indicators should be combined with student achievement measures.

Steps to Disaggregation of Data

1. **Set level of mastery.**

   The district needs to establish locally specified standards of mastery for the various assessment measures used to evaluate student performance. The question should be asked: "At what level must students achieve in order to have a high probability of successfully completing the next grade level?" A variety of assessments can be used to determine if students have mastered the essential learnings the district and schools care most about.

Example A:

In their Master Plan, Spencerport (New York) Central Schools established the following level of mastery:

- . . . All students regardless of socio-economic status, ethnicity or gender shall achieve minimal academic mastery. Minimum academic mastery is the 40th percentile on the Stanford Achievement Test and 65% passing rate on the New York State Regents examinations.
- An annual school improvement goal equivalent to at least a one percent increase on a criterion test.
- An excellence goal for the students who normally do well, equivalent to at least one percent increase on a criterion test. For example, a significant increase in the proportion of students scoring in stanines 7-8-9 on the Stanford Achievement Test. (pp. 2–3)

Example B:

The State of Michigan tests students at various grade levels in a number of different subject areas. A mastery level of 75 percent of all the test items is considered passing on this modified criterion-referenced test.

However, Texas has determined that the mastery level of its statewide tests will vary within the areas tested and grades assessed.

2. **Determine how mastery levels will be measured.**

If a norm-referenced test, such as the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) or Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) is used, mastery may be defined as scoring above the bottom quartile or scoring above the third or fourth stanine. (See previous example from Spencerport, New York.) In setting mastery, school personnel should ask themselves whether students performing

below the 40th percentile are likely to have mastered the essential skills and knowledge needed to perform at the next grade level at that school. A criterion-referenced test (a test which shows individual students' mastery of clearly defined objectives) can also be used to assess student performance. If criterion-referenced tests are used, a standard of 75 percent or 80 percent correct can be chosen as the mastery level. (See section on Monitoring, p. 158)

3. **Organize students into subgroups.**

The second step is to establish the categories by which student data can be grouped and reviewed. Two questions to ask at this point: "Are all our students equitably learning the curriculum we have considered essential?" and "What group or groups of students do we suspect may not be meeting these criteria?" These students comprise the subgroup(s) whose outcome data need to be carefully examined. Districts should consider using these subgroupings: race, gender, and socioeconomic status. (Socioeconomic status is usually considered to be the most critical grouping.) Other subgroups which might also be used are listed on page 104.

4. **Disaggregate test data.**

Once it has been determined which indicators will represent SES (i.e., mother's level of education, father's level of education, or some other acceptable measure), the next step is to disaggregate individual student assessment data using these criteria. Example A is an analysis of twelve students who had not achieved mastery (defined as letter Grade C or above) on the end-of-year teacher-made mathematics test. Mother's level of education was used as an indicator of SES.

Sample Disaggregated Analysis

Example A

Student #	Name*	Mother's Level of Educ.	SES Status
1	Barumer, Dewey	17	U
2	DeYager, Leonore	12	L
3	Faltz, Robert	19	U
4	Gillen, Gean	11	L
5	Kanis, Arthur	20	U
6	Lieberman, Ruth	14	U
7	Marcellus, Anthony	10	L
8	Otto, Mary	16	U
9	Richel, Joan	9	L
10	Rundell, William	13	U
11	Seaton, Gary	11	L
12	Tuthill, Ann	13	U

*Names are fictitious.

L (lower) = Twelfth grade education or less (i.e., 0–12).
U (upper) = Education in addition to high school education (i.e., 13+).
NOTE: Criteria for L and U is determined by each building or district.

Adapted from a compilation by Robert E. Sudlow, Spencerport (NY) Schools.

Example B pertains to the same twelve students with mastery defined as achieving above the 40th percentile on the SAT. In this example, eligibility for free or reduced lunch was used as an indicator of SES instead of mother's level of education.

Sample Disaggregated Analysis

Example B

Student #	Total Reading Percentile	Lower SES		Middle and Upper SES	
		Below 40th Percentile	At or Above 40th Percentile	Below 40th Percentile	At or Above 40th Percentile
1	98				*
2	10	*			
3	75				*
4	43		*		
5	50				*
6	63				*
7	45		*		
8	42				*
9	18	*			
10	55				*
11	88		*		
12	37			*	

Computerized Disaggregation. Data can be disaggregated manually, but if the district has access to a computer the data can be disaggregated using a spread sheet program. The following instructions can assist in the process of entering data into a computer program.

Simplified Steps to Entering Data into a Computer

1. Record the school's name, grade level, and the school year in which the data were gathered.
2. Enter each student's number, (optional, depending upon your student accounting system), name, and the socioeconomic indicator (SES) for that pupil. Cut point between lower, middle, and upper SES will vary from district to district. However, SES should include at least 15 percent of the total student population.
3. Record each student's score.
4. Create four columns. The first pair of columns is for lower SES students below academic mastery and for lower SES students at or above academic mastery. The second pair of columns is for middle/upper SES students below academic mastery and for middle/upper SES students at or above academic mastery. As indicated previously, criteria must be developed by each school or district to determine mastery for each level and each assessment instrument used.

Lower SES		**Upper SES**	
Below Minimum Mastery	Above Minimum Mastery	Below Minimum Mastery	Above Minimum Mastery

5. Develop a two-by-two table characteristic of a disaggregated analysis by using the count function of the spreadsheet program.
6. Percentages for the disaggregated analysis are computed through writing formulas for the appropriate cells of the spreadsheet.

Data Analysis

Regardless of how student outcome data are disaggregated—by hand or by computer—the value of the exercise comes with the examination of the distribution of data and subsequent conclusions which are drawn. By answering the following questions, it should be possible to draw certain conclusions about the equity of student outcomes, thus helping to determine if the district and the individual school are effective in teaching for learning for *all*.

1. Is the proportion (percentage) of lower SES students who demonstrate academic mastery the same as the proportion of middle and upper SES students who demonstrate academic mastery?

2. Is the proportion of any other identified student subgroup (e.g., gender, race, etc.) substantially the same as that of the rest of the student body and/or district?

3. Can we start to project some possible theories as to why the results look the way they do?

4. Can we begin to examine the role the district plays in these outcomes?

One school district has declared that a disaggregated analysis shall be used to establish the effectiveness of a building's instructional program.

Effective is defined as the combination of all of the following:

A. Ninety-five, or greater, percent of all the students at each grade level shall demonstrate minimum academic mastery. Children in Learning Disabilities classes shall be included in building analyses. The effect of the inclusion of the children on the total population shall be carefully monitored and analyzed.

B. There shall be no significant difference in the proportion of youth demonstrating minimum academic mastery as a function of socio-economic class.

C. The above two conditions shall have been obtained for a minimum of three consecutive years.

Should a school building not be effective according to this criteria then we recommend that the following definition of school improvement be used until the building attains effectiveness.

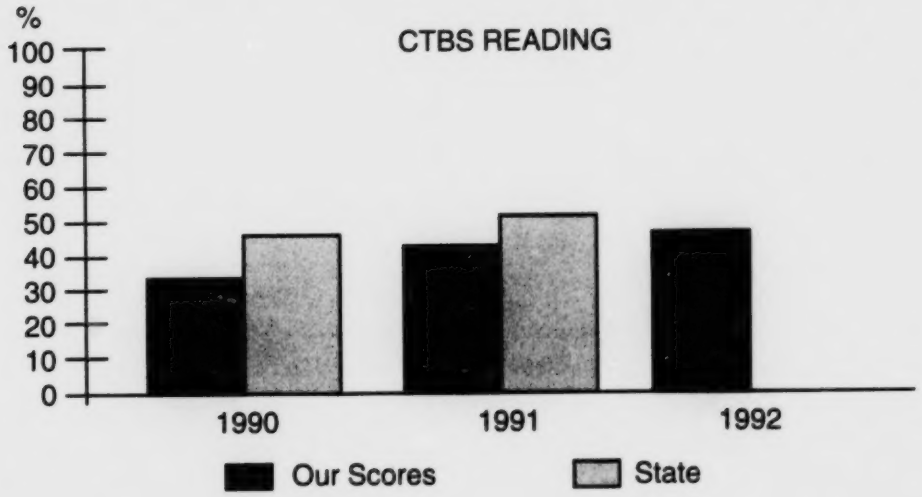
A. There shall be an annual increase in the proportion of students who demonstrate minimum academic mastery, and

B. There shall be an annual decrease in the proportion of youth demonstrating minimum academic mastery as a function of socioeconomic class.

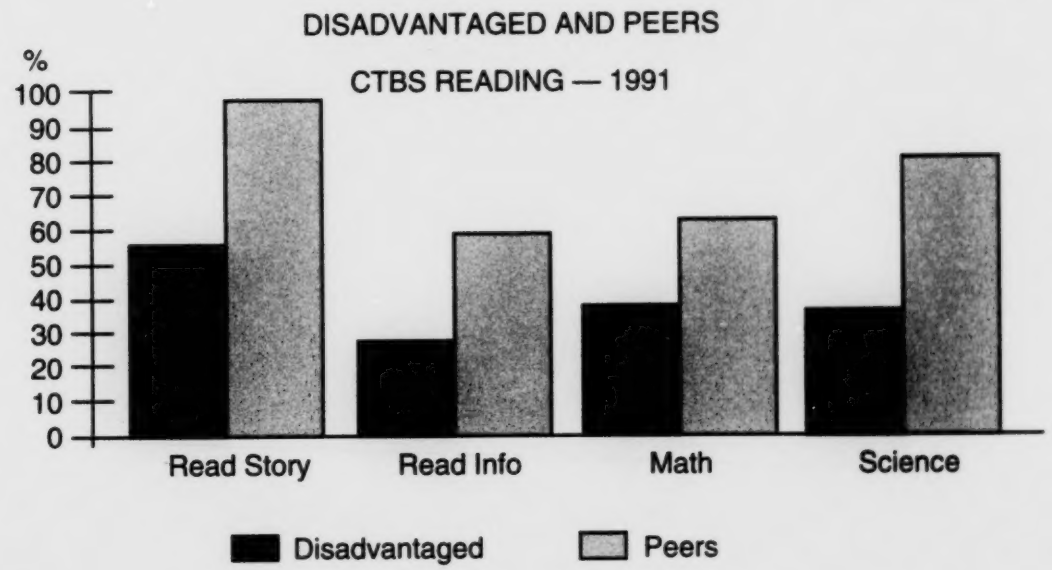
Spencerport (New York) Central Schools, 1990, p. 29

Examples of Results of Data Disaggregation

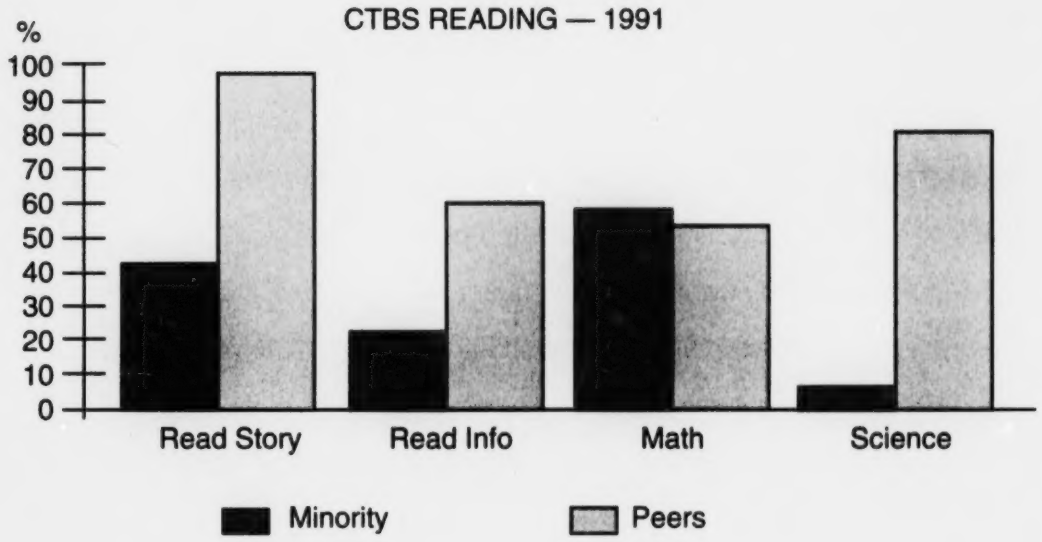
Comparison of District Scores to State Scores



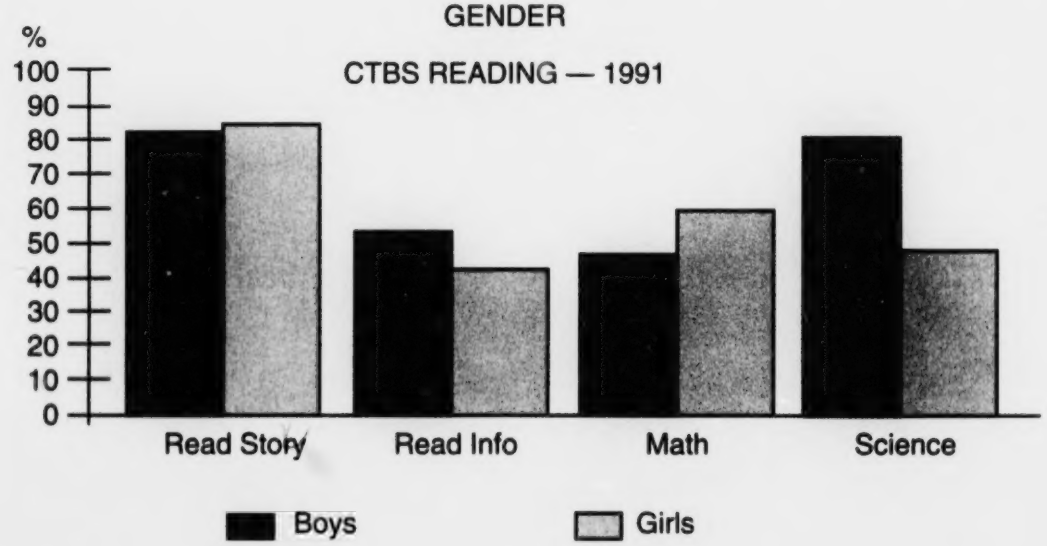
Comparison of Socioeconomic Groups



Comparison of Minority Groups and Others



Comparison of Gender



The following are some of the most frequently asked questions about disaggregation (adapted from Lezotte and Jacoby, 1990):

Question: Why should we disaggregate student outcome data?

Answer: Aggregate data indicate whether a *total* student population has mastered the essential curriculum. Aggregate data can mask the fact that certain groups of students have or have not mastered these essential learnings. *Disaggregation* of these aggregate data indicates how well certain subsets (identified by SES, gender, race, etc.) of the total student population have met and/or surpassed an identified standard. Disaggregation is a practical, hands-on process that allows a school's faculty to answer the two critical questions: "Effective at what? Effective for whom?" It is not a problem-*solving* process but a problem-*finding* process.

Question: Should student outcomes to be disaggregated be restricted to test scores?

Answer: The data to be disaggregated need not be limited to test scores. Data could include teacher ratings of work completed (e.g., project grades), attendance figures, information on student attitudes (liking of school), etc. If the data meet the minimum essentials of measurement (reliability and validity) and if they are inclusive of all students (not just some), they may be good candidates for disaggregation.

Question: What demographic data should a staff use to examine their outcome data?

Answer: Basic to the concept of the effective school are three variables that ought to be considered first: gender, race/ethnicity (if significant proportions are present in

the school), and socioeconomic status (especially disadvantaged compared to middle class). These three variables tend to explain most of the variance in student achievement in the United States.

Question: In the effective schools process, the concept of *curriculum mastery* is important. How is this concept defined, and is it a part of the disaggregation process?

Answer: *Curriculum mastery* is defined as that level of student performance needed to be predictably successful at the next grade. In some measures (such as state assessment tests), mastery standards are defined in the assessment measure itself (e.g., 75 percent of the objectives mastered). Sometimes schools choose the median on a standardized norm-referenced test. For other measures, the standard needs to be determined locally. For example, in answering the question, "What eighth-grade math score must a student achieve before we can be confident s/he could take and pass Algebra with a C grade or better?" the answer determines the level of performance needed to predict success at the next level.

Question: Mastery is generally associated with lower levels of achievement—i.e., minimums, floors. What about those who worry that the top-performing students are being penalized by the effective schools process?

Answer: Effective schools are intended to fulfill the dream of teaching for learning for all. In that regard, no student should suffer because of the school's attempt to help all children. One way to address this concern is to disaggregate data using a standard that gets at the upper reaches of the measurement scale. For example, on a standardized test, it is possible to monitor over time how many students score at or above the 90 percentile. Or, if 75 percent is considered minimum mastery on an

assessment, one could monitor over time how many students score at or above 95 percent on the assessment. There are a variety of methods that can and should be employed to be sure that the program is serving the best interests of all children.

Question: Our student population is small. When outcome data are disaggregated, the numbers of students are so small that they are not perceived as reliable. For example, one student may represent a total of 10 percent of a class that only has 10 boys. Is there any way to adjust for this problem of small size?

Answer: Two strategies have been found useful in addressing this problem. First, it is suggested that the school collapse data across years to help increase the numbers in the cells of the analysis. Examine the scores for two or three years to see what the trend data look like. Second, data could be collapsed across grade levels. For example, Grades 1, 2, and 3 could be treated as a single group of early elementary students, and Grades 4, 5, and 6 as the upper elementary group. It would be possible to determine how well boys do in early elementary compared to later elementary programs. A similar analysis could compare the success for boys to girls.

Question: High schools do not tend to have as many standardized measurements available to them as the elementary schools. What adjustments can be made?

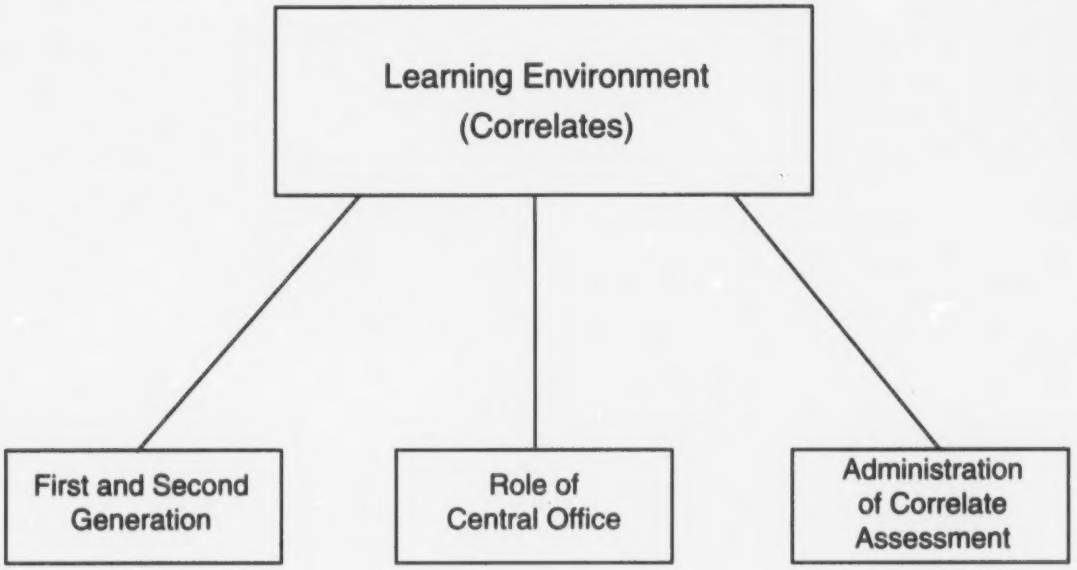
Answer: High schools could move toward end-of-course or end-of-year curriculum mastery tests. In the absence of such measures, the faculty could use grade distributions, teacher evaluations, or other indicators that are used to communicate student performance. Student selection of certain courses or activities can be used as a criterion.

Question: Are the concepts of an *effective school* and an *improving school* one and the same?

Answer: An *effective school* is one that has met some predetermined standard of accomplishment. An *improving school* is one that is able to show progress from one year to the next toward that predetermined standard. In that sense, it is possible to have the following kinds of schools:

1. Effective and still improving.
2. Not yet effective, but improving.
3. Effective but not improving.
4. Neither effective nor improving.

Stage C
Step 2



Step 2 — Learning Environment (Correlates)

The origins of the effective schools research arose from the need of educators to find and describe schools where virtually all students were learning the intended curriculum, even those students who traditionally are least well served by schools (i.e., the children of the poor). These early studies were significant because they carefully described alterable school factors found to be associated with high levels of achievement.

It's important to remember that most effective schools research is primarily correlational. The researchers did not show that those factors or correlates *caused* increased student achievement, but the research does indicate that there is a *strong relationship* between the correlates and achievement in a variety of school settings and in many studies conducted over a long period of time.

These correlates of effective schools are called alterable elements by the West Virginia State Department of Education (McCue, 1987) because they can be changed at the school level by those who work in the school. For example, schools cannot exert much control over the educational level of the mother, but they can exert considerably more control over the expectations that the school holds for students. Schools cannot exert much control over the occupation of the father, but they can more easily affect the instructional leadership in the school.

First and Second Generation

Correlates of effective schools research (as defined by Edmonds and Frederiksen and by the Connecticut Department of Education). Ronald Edmonds originally identified five correlates in his research conducted with New York City Schools in the late '70s. As work progressed in the effective schools area,

some changes were made by others, but the integrity of the five correlates remained. For example, the Connecticut Department of Education developed an effective schools questionnaire, which utilized Edmonds' work, but for the purposes of the questionnaire divided one correlate into two parts. The authors of the questionnaire also added one correlate which, upon validation of the questionnaire, proved to be an appropriate addition.

The following chart shows how the seven correlates described on pages 121–122 were derived:

Edmonds—Five Correlates	Connecticut Department of Education—Seven Correlates
• Safe and Orderly Environment	• Safe and Orderly Environment
• Instructional Leadership	• Instructional Leadership
• Climate of High Expectations for Success	• Climate of High Expectations for Success
• Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	• Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
• Pupil Acquisition of Basic Skills	• Clear and Focused Mission
	• Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task
	• Home-School Relations

Correlates of Effective Schools—First Generation*

1. Safe and Orderly Environment

In the effective school, there is an orderly, purposeful, businesslike atmosphere which is free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.

2. Climate of High Expectations for Success

In the effective school, there is a climate of expectation in which the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can attain mastery of the essential school skills, and they believe that they have the capability to help all students attain that mastery.

3. Instructional Leadership

In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates that mission to the staff, parents, and students. The principal understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program.

4. Clear and Focused Mission

In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated school mission through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability. Staff accept responsibility for students' learning of the school's essential curricular goals.

* For a more detailed description of each correlate or characteristic as described by Ronald Edmonds and Lawrence Lezotte, see Appendix B, pp. 229–237.

5. **Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task**

In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential skills. For a high percentage of this time, students are engaged in whole class or large group learning activities that are planned and teacher directed.

6. **Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress**

In the effective school, student academic progress is measured frequently. A variety of assessment procedures are used. The results of the assessments are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program.

7. **Home-School Relations**

In the effective school, parents understand and support the school's basic mission and are given the opportunity to play an important role in helping the school to achieve this mission.

Correlates of Effective Schools—Second Generation*

We've already done effective schools, what's next?

A number of schools have been relying on effective schools research as the framework for their school improvement program. After three or four years, many claim that they have successfully met the criteria described in the research on the correlates of effective schools. These educators ask if there is anything that comes after, or goes beyond, these standards.

The concept of second generation correlates attempts to incorporate the recent research and school improvement findings and offers an even more challenging developmental stage to which schools committed to the *learning-for-all* mission ought to aspire.

There are two underlying assumptions to keep in mind: First, school improvement is an "endless journey." Second, the second generation correlates cannot be implemented successfully unless the first generation correlate standards are present in the school. In one sense, the second generation correlates represent a developmental step beyond the first and, when successfully accomplished, will move the school even closer to the mission of *learning for all.*

(Lezotte, 1991, p. 1)

1. Safe and Orderly Environment

In the second generation, the concept of a school environment conducive to learning for all must move beyond the elimination of undesirable behavior. The second generation will place increased emphasis on the *presence of certain desirable behaviors* (e.g., cooperative team learning). These second generation schools will be places where students actually help one another.

* For a more detailed description of each correlate, see Appendix C, pp. 238–245.

2. **Climate of High Expectations for Success**

In the second generation, the emphasis placed on high expectations for success will be broadened significantly. High expectations for success will be judged, not only by the initial staff beliefs and behaviors, but also by the organization's response when some students do not learn. For example, if the teacher plans a lesson, delivers that lesson, assesses learning and finds that some students did not learn, and still goes on to the next lesson, then that teacher didn't expect the students to learn in the first place. If the school condones through silence that teacher's behavior, it apparently does not expect the students to learn or the teacher to teach these students.

3. **Instructional Leadership**

In the second generation, the concept of instructional leadership will be broadened, and l*eadership will be viewed as a dispersed concept that includes all adults, especially the teachers.* The broader concept of leadership recognizes that leadership is always delegated from the followership in any organization. It also recognizes what teachers have known for a long time and what good schools have capitalized on since the beginning of time: namely, expertise is generally distributed among many, not concentrated in a single person.

4. **Clear and Focused Mission**

In the first generation the effective school mission emphasized *teaching for learning for all* and the focus was on *mastery of mostly low-level skills.* In the second generation, the focus will shift toward a more appropriate *balance*

between higher-level learning and those more basic skills that are truly prerequisite to their mastery. Designing and delivering a curriculum that responds to the demands of accountability, and is responsive to the need for higher levels of learning, will require substantial staff development. Finally, the new formulation of *learning for all* opens the door to the continued learning of the educators as well as the students.

5. Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task

In the second generation, time will continue to be a difficult problem for the teacher. In all likelihood, *the problems that arise from too much to teach and not enough time to teach it will intensify.* One of the reasons that many of the mandated approaches to school reform have failed is that, in every case, the local school was asked to do more! One of the characteristics of the most effective schools is their willingness to declare that some things are more important than others; they are willing to abandon some less important content so as to be able to have enough time dedicated to those areas that are valued the most. The only alternative to abandonment would be to adjust the available time that students spend in school, so that those who need more time to reach mastery would be given it. The current system of compulsory schooling makes little allowance for the fact that some students need more time to achieve mastery. If we could get the system to be more mastery-based and more humane at the same time, our nation and its students would benefit immensely.

6. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

In the second generation, the use of technology, first, will permit teachers to do a better job of monitoring their students' progress and, second, will allow

students to monitor their own learning and, where necessary, adjust their own behavior. The emphasis will continue to shift away from standardized norm-referenced paper-pencil tests and toward curricular-based, criterion-referenced measures of student mastery, with more authentic assessments of curriculum mastery. Teachers will pay much more attention to the alignment that must exist between the intended, taught, and tested curriculum. Two new questions are being stimulated by the reform movement and will dominate much of the professional educators' discourse in the second generation: "What's worth knowing?" and "How will we know when they know it?" Educators and citizens are going to have to come to terms with that second question, and that will require patience. However, once we begin to reach consensus, the schools will be able to deliver significant progress toward these agreed-upon outcomes.

7. Home-School Relations

In the second generation, the relationship between parents and the school must be an authentic partnership between the school and home. In the past when teachers said they wanted more parent involvement, more often than not they were looking for unqualified support from parents. Many teachers believed that parents, if they truly valued education, knew how to get their children to behave in the ways that the school desired. But parents are too often as perplexed as the teachers about the best way to inspire students to learn what the school teaches. The best hope for effectively confronting the problem—and not each other—is to build enough trust and enough communication to realize that both teachers and parents have the same goal—an effective school and home for all children!

Role of Central Office

Several measurement instruments are currently available which are useful in assessing the perceived presence of the seven correlates. (See Appendix D, pp. 246–247.) These instruments are designed to elicit perceptions of the correlates at the time the instrument is administered. All of the instruments measure building staff perceptions, and some have editions which measure perceptions of parents, students, and/or noncertified staff. The instruments can be hand or machine scored. Machine scoring is a simple matter of running the answer sheets through a scanner.

The district school improvement team should collect sample assessment instruments and make them available for building school improvement teams to examine. Each building should then determine which assessment instrument would provide the appropriate data. It is not considered necessary that all the buildings in a district select the *same* correlate assessment instrument.

Administration of Correlate Assessment

Administration of the correlate assessment should be arranged at the discretion of each building. The results can be tabulated by hand or scanned by a computer. Central office could provide computer scanning or send the assessment instrument to a local university, state education department or education service agency. *A word of warning:* no matter where the scoring takes place, the results *must* be kept confidential. Assessment results should be sent to the principal and building school improvement team for use with the development of the building school improvement plan. The results should not be shared with others *unless* the building principal and staff decide to do so.

Experience has shown that there are certain precautions which should be made before any correlate assessment is administered. If careful attention is paid to these details, many common pitfalls can be avoided.

1. Be certain that the district and the building is far enough along with the school improvement process that staff has an understanding of the background of effective schools research (i.e., *do not administer the assessment in a vacuum*).

2. Timing is important! It is best to administer a correlate assessment *after* the building student outcome data have been collected and analyzed.

3. Be certain that the administrators and staff know the purpose of the assessment (i.e., for planning, determining strengths, identifying areas of concern).

4. Assure administrators and staff of the confidentiality of their responses.

5. Assure administrators and staff that the results will be used internally and will *not* be used as an evaluation of their effectiveness.

6. Give the correlate assessment the value it deserves. In other words, ask building administrators to administer the instrument during a meeting set up for this purpose. *Do not* send the assessment instrument from central office to each teacher. Caution the building principal *not* to put the assessment in teachers' mailboxes with directions to fill it in and return to the office!

7. If scan sheets are to be used, advise principals to be certain that staff follow instructions for use of such sheets.

Scoring

As an example, the table on page 130 from *Building Effective Schools* (Chrispeels, Meaney 1985) represents a printout of the distribution of responses to each item for the home/school relations correlate on the San Diego School

Effectiveness Questionnaire. The average for each item is reported, starting with the highest agreement items to lowest agreement. This information is very important for planning purposes because it allows staff to see in detail the extent of agreement in perceptions concerning specific areas of school functioning and provides the opportunity for staff discussions on perceived strengths and weaknesses in the school. In the example given, the items receiving the lowest scores were: Question No. 64 ("Many parents visit the school to observe instruction"), Question No. 36 ("90-100 percent of parents attend parent teacher conferences"), Question No. 68 ("Active parent-school group involving many parents exists"). The highest scored item was Question No. 34 ("Parent-teacher conferences focus on student achievement.") These questions and answers represent a point of departure for further discussion of Home-School Relations. The responses to these items need to be compared with other data collected and with school archival data.

Spencerport (New York) Central Schools has found it helpful to collapse the scores into a manageable number of categories to determine if an item is one of strength, concern, or possible concern. Collapsing scores means combining certain responses. The following example shows the combining of the two lowest response options and the two highest response options. After the responses have been collapsed it is necessary to analyze the results. See example on page 131. (Sudlow, n.d.)

Printout Showing Distribution of Teacher Responses to Effective Schools Questionnaire

	Home School Relations	SD (1) %	D (2) %	U (3) %	A (4) %	SA (5) %	Total	Mean
34	Parent-teacher conferences focus on student achievement	0	6	19	58	16	31	3.84
84	Teachers communicate to parents by visits, calls, letters	3	7	13	63	13	30	3.77
71	Teachers & parents are aware of the homework policy	3	13	19	52	13	31	3.58
96	Teachers communicate student progress to parents	3	20	7	60	10	30	3.53
49(R)	Parent-teacher conferences improve student achievement	0	29	26	42	3	31	3.19
47(R)	Parents and teachers cooperate on monitoring homework	3	52	23	19	3	31	2.68
31	Homework is monitored at home and in school with follow-up	23	32	19	23	3	31	2.52
35	90–100% of students complete homework before school	17	57	7	20	0	30	2.30
67	Most parents promote the instructional program	26	42	19	10	3	31	2.23
79	Many parents initiate contacts with the school	30	43	17	10	0	30	2.07
9	Most parents would rate this school as superior	39	48	6	3	3	31	1.84
69	Many parents involved in home and school supports network	48	29	13	10	0	30	1.84
64(R)	Many parents visit the school to observe instruction	48	39	3	6	3	31	1.77
36	90–100% of parents attend parent-teacher conferences	58	23	10	10	0	31	1.71
68	Active parent-school group involving many parents exist	55	32	3	10	0	31	1.68
	Total Agree 31% Total Disagree 55%	24	31	14	26	5	31	2.57

Example:

First — **Collapse Data**

Item Responses:	A	B	C	D	E
% Response:	11%	14%	9%	45%	22%
	25%			67%	

Second — **Analyze Data Patterns**

- *A right skew* — 2/3 or more D & E — indicates *strength.*
- *A left skew* — 2/3 or more A & B — *concern.*
- *A middle skew* — 2/3 or more C's — would indicate *possible concern.*
- *A flat* — even distribution — would also indicate *possible concern.*

Discuss results with staff

One of the most valuable exercises resulting from the correlate assessment is the staff discussion(s) which follows. The school improvement team should lead staff (total or in small groups) through an analysis of the results. One of the purposes of the discussions is to make sure the strengths and weaknesses identified in the assessment do not result in incorrect conclusions. It is important to verify that staff had common understanding of all questions asked on the survey. It is also important to know if a perceived problem is really a problem or just a statement of existing conditions which staff wishes to maintain. For example, in one school an analysis of the safe and orderly correlate revealed that staff indicated they had a minimum of assistance from administration with classroom discipline problems.

However, on further discussion, staff revealed they preferred to handle their own discipline problems and only wanted administrators' assistance with severe problems. Without this discussion, an incorrect conclusion could have been drawn.

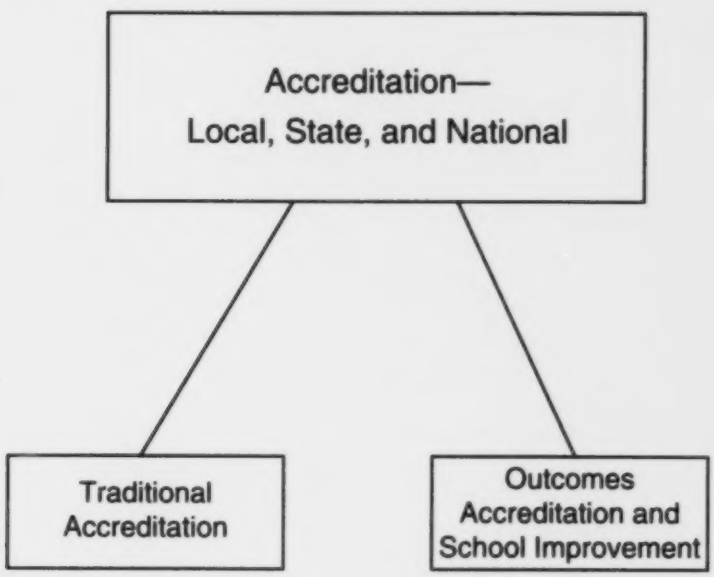
The correlate assessment, item by item, also actually teaches the staff about what each correlate means. They learn to "see" the correlates and learn more about what each means. When improvement strategies are to be determined, this knowledge of the correlates will be of much value. This knowledge will also help staff begin to access more research, if needed, as each correlate has a body of research associated with it.

The chart below shows how one school presented the correlate assessment results for staff discussion. The school improvement team filled in the first five columns with the pertinent data and distributed the chart to staff. Lively discussions followed in which staff came to consensus on each question — whether or not it was a strength or concern in the building, or if more information was needed.

Characteristics of Effective Schools
Analysis Sheet

Question	Year	% Agree	% D. K.	% Disagree	Strength	Concern	Need more info.	Comments
	19___							
	19___							
	19___							
	19___							
	19___							
	19___							
	19___							
	19___							
	19___							
	19___							

Stage C
Step 3



Step 3 — Accreditation—Local, State, and National

Accreditation at the local, state, and/or national levels is one way for a district to do a self-examination and compare itself to certain standards. The need for self-study and subsequent development of a school improvement plan cannot be disputed. A problem can arise, however, when the standards set by an outside agency are not necessarily the ones that a district would set for itself.

Traditional Accreditation

Accreditation standards can often seem far removed from the purpose of teaching for learning. For example, it takes a giant leap of faith to link how well all students are learning the desired curriculum to the number of books in a school library or the number of teachers with advanced degrees.

Because of this loose relationship, several regional accrediting bodies led by the North Central Association Commission on Schools are offering an alternative accreditation model which emphasizes student performance. As opposed to traditional accreditation, the outcomes accreditation model links student achievement to accreditation more directly. The specific focus is, or should be, on valued student outcomes. In many ways the outcomes accreditation model parallels the school improvement planning process based on effective schools research. Staff is asked to identify cognitive and affective target areas and to develop an improvement plan containing appropriate strategies and evaluation measures. The target areas are determined through an analysis of student outcome data and a disaggregation of this data.*

* For more information contact: North Central Association Commission on Schools, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

Outcomes Accreditation and School Improvement

Outcomes accreditation parallels the school improvement model based on effective schools research. Therefore, any school involved in the school improvement process can be also completing the requirements for accreditation. While both traditional accreditation and outcomes accreditation have improved school programs as their goal, there are a number of characteristics of outcomes accreditation that makes it different from traditional accreditation.

1. In outcomes accreditation, *evaluation is linked with accreditation more directly.* Evaluation and improvement planning are integral and essentially continuous ingredients in accreditation under the outcomes accreditation plan.

2. In an outcomes accreditation evaluation, *specific target areas—some cognitive and some affective*—are selected. Special attention (analysis and improvement planning) is given to these areas.

3. In outcomes accreditation a *major focus is on outcomes.* Baseline data are compiled so that after a specific period (up to three years) progress in the special target areas can be documented.

4. Outcomes accreditation functions on a shorter cycle, usually *three to five years.* Further, involvement in self-analysis, improvement planning, and plan implementation are essentially continuous, with more frequent contact from an outside committee or team.

5. Because of the emphasis on outcomes in specific target areas, the *process of outcomes accreditation is diagnostic/prognostic in nature.* Cycle length depends on time allowed for the fruition of the improvement plan. If target goals have been met, new target areas are selected for the next cycle. If any target goals were not met, they may be continued along with some new target areas in the new cycle.

6. In the outcomes accreditation format, the *end result of the process is a complete and integrated improvement plan.* The improvement plan is a description of research-based strategies the school intends to use to reduce discrepancies between current and desired levels of student performance. Then the process continues with the implementation of the improvement plan and the annual assessment to check the trend of change in the target areas.

7. In outcomes accreditation, *equity* as well as quality should be a direct concern. Equity is attained when essentially all students improve as a result of the implementation of an improvement plan. Schools employ a technique called *disaggregation of data* as a means of identifying appropriate subgroups of students for separate assessment. Disaggregation is conducted in such a way that students less likely to achieve in a selected target area are identified in the assessment.

8. The visiting team in outcomes accreditation is smaller than the typical traditional team. Its primary purpose is to *validate the appropriateness of the target areas, procedures, and the improvement plan* and to document enhanced student success. Contact with the team, or with selected members of the team, occurs two or three times during a five-year period.

9. A commonly utilized person in the outcomes accreditation process is the resource specialist. This person, either from the school or external to the school, may function both as an assessment advisor and a process monitor.

State accreditation

Many states have developed, or are developing, accreditation standards for K–12 school districts. These standards are often linked to state assessment instruments which are intended to "take the temperature" of the state's educational system. Also, state accreditation is frequently linked to a mandated or suggested core curriculum.

Those districts involved with the school improvement process can often determine that the process closely parallels many state accreditation models. Thus,

a duplication of efforts works in their favor. But, a *word of caution*: Many states do *not* require that data be disaggregated or that goals be written in student outcome terms. However, the State of Michigan has incorporated these elements in its newly developed accreditation process, which is presented here as an example:

Mission Statement

It is the mission of the state accreditation program to assure that an equitable, quality education is achieved by all Michigan students.

Definition

Accreditation is defined as an ongoing and collaborative process which confirms that a school has met a set of standards deemed essential for quality education for all students. This accreditation process fosters school improvement, and ensures identifiable progress toward attainment of student outcomes, through requirements for institutional self-evaluation as a stimulus for growth and improvement.

Process

The state accreditation program will provide:

1. Standards regarding the inputs, processes, and student outcomes necessary for equity and quality educational programs.

2. A process which defines common elements of an educational program, while recognizing the diversity of Michigan's schools and the need for additional locally defined student outcomes.

3. A process which helps to assure that schools are progressing toward the achievement of those standards and locally identified outcomes.

4. A process which requires the involvement of the school staff and the community.

5. A process which requires a strong, ongoing commitment to educational review through periodic self-evaluation and validation.

6. A process which results in a plan for school improvement and the continual assessment of the success of that plan.

7. A process which leads schools to the achievement of quality education for all students.

8. The state's citizens with information about the status of the state's schools in providing equitable, quality educational programs.

. . . . . .

The Multi-Level Accreditation System

The State Board of Education encourages excellence in education and expects that all schools will eventually be accredited. Multiple levels of accreditation will be denoted by a variety of certificates and the publication of the status of each school on a yearly basis following the State Board of Education's approval of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Accreditation. In this way, schools which are at various stages of meeting the standards will be recognized for their efforts.

The multi-level accreditation program will include existing accreditation steps and add others. The program might appear in the following manner:

Years 1 and 2	Candidacy
Year 3	School is granted Conditional Accreditation Schools in this category have met the required standards and have developed a three to five year school improvement plan which has been adopted by the local board of education.
Years 3 and 4	Implementation of the school improvement plan and collection of evidence that the student outcomes are being met.

Year 5	School submits evidence that the self-identified student outcomes are either being met or that substantive change has taken place toward achieving the self-identified student outcomes and makes application for Accredited Status.

Schools that cannot meet the conditional accreditation status may apply for an additional year(s) of candidacy. The application will include the standards which are not yet being met and a plan which will lead to achievement of the standards prior to the next standards report. At this point arrangements can be made for the schools to receive technical assistance and support from colleges, universities, intermediate school districts, other interested educational associations and organizations and State agencies.

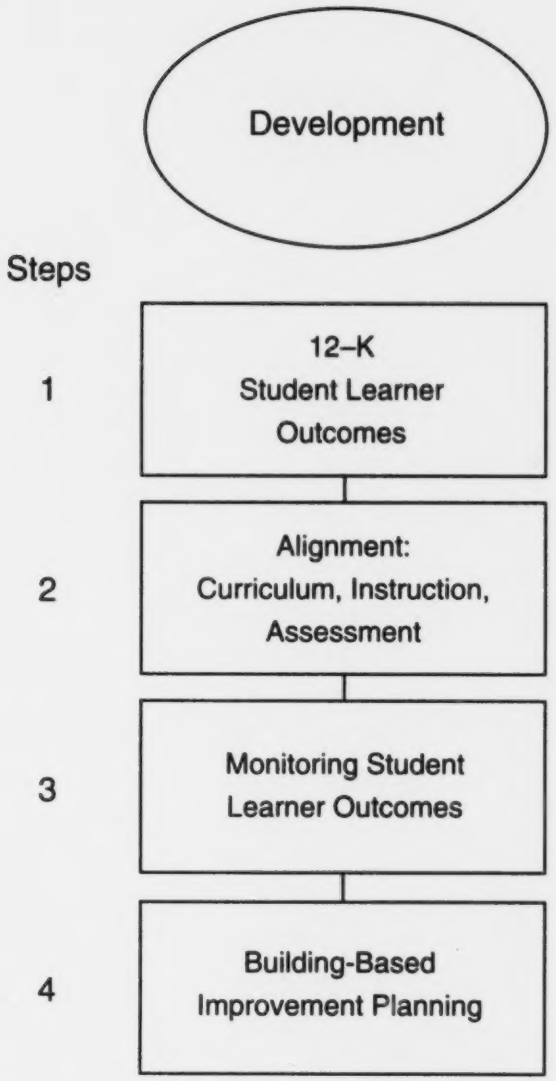
From State of Michigan. *Michigan Accreditation Program: Position Paper on the Development of K–12 Standards for P.A. 25.* 1991.

Note: Certain standards and guidelines employed in the accreditation process were being reviewed throughout the state at the time this book went to press.

School District Improvement Planning Process

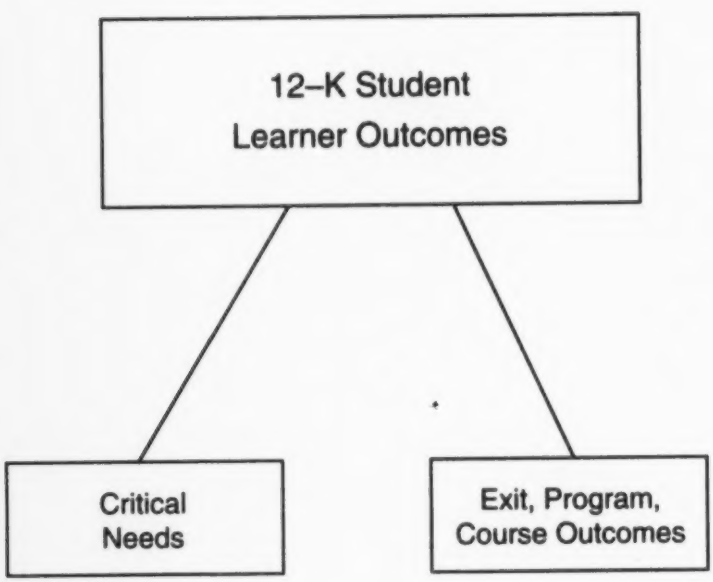
Stage D — Development

"How will the district get there?"



Stage D

Step 1



Step 1 — 12–K Student Learner Outcomes

School improvement based on effective schools research assumes that students will master the essential curriculum that has been identified by the district. If a district has not specified a curriculum that stands independent of textbooks and materials currently being used, then it can be argued that a curriculum is nonexistent.

After the development of the district mission and exit outcomes, the next major activity which needs to be undertaken is the development of program, course and/or grade level outcomes. *What is it that students are expected to learn in each area of the curriculum?* It's obvious that this question must be answered if school improvement is to assure the mastery of identified learnings.

Note that references will be made to a **12–K**, not a K–12, curriculum and outcomes. This purposeful delineation indicates the need to "begin with the end in mind" and to backward-map the curriculum from the exit outcomes to program and subject or course outcomes.

Critical Needs

The development of clear measurable statements of expected learner outcomes is one of the most difficult tasks in the planning process. Nevertheless, it is critical that teachers, administrators, parents, and students know what is to be learned in a particular program, course or subject. If student learnings are not clear, teachers will find it difficult to allocate appropriate instructional time or give the proper emphasis to reteaching. If carefully and precisely carried out, this step alone

will do much to assure future student success. *Be sure that adequate time and input of the critical stakeholder groups is directed to this task.*

It is not the purpose of this guidebook to provide detailed instructions on how to write student learner outcomes. There are numerous individuals, programs, and education agencies that can provide needed information and guidance. However, it should be made very clear that, without specified student learner outcomes, a district has, at best, a generalized, loosely monitored curriculum. As student learner outcomes are written or revised, these questions should be considered:

1. Are the student learner outcomes consistent with the district's curriculum?
2. Are the student learner outcomes consistent with the same program/course in other schools in the district?
3. Do the student learner outcomes embrace the notion that one of the major purposes of education is preparation for work, civic and community participation, and personal fulfillment.

Middle Cities Education Association, 1991.

Exit, Program, Course Outcomes

For the purposes of clarification, *program outcomes* refer to measurable statements of student knowledge, abilities or performance within a given curricular area, i.e., science, mathematics, fine arts. *Course or subject outcomes* are measurable statements of student knowledge, abilities, or performance within specific areas of the program, i.e., biology, algebra, choral music.

The following is an example of a district's program development of a course or subject outcome which stems from an exit outcome (as shown by the arrow):

Exit Outcome: Students will communicate fact, opinion and feeling effectively by a variety of appropriate means to a variety of appropriate audiences.

Program Outcome: Mathematics students will report the results of personal mathematical research or investigation in oral, written or electronic form.

Subject/Course Outcome: 6th Grade mathematics students will report the results of exploration or experimentation in basic arithmetic, geometry, probability or statistics in oral, written or electronic form.

Adapted from Natrona County Schools
Casper, Wyoming

One district approached the task in a slightly different way by graphing the district exit outcomes with the high school program outcomes, concepts to be learned, and materials to be used. The relationship between the exit outcomes and program outcomes were then coded (see chart p. 147). The district expects to extend this planning to the middle and elementary schools.

District Exit Outcomes:

A student:

1. Displays self-esteem as a learner and a person.
2. Exhibits cognitive learning:
   a. Masters essential skills.
   b. Learns on an extended basis.
   c. Progresses from low to high cognitive levels.

3. Possesses process skills:
   a. Solves problems.
   b. Communicates effectively.
   c. Makes decisions in a logical mature manner.
   d. Demonstrates accountability.
   e. Understands group processes.
4. Learns in a self-directed manner.
5. Shows concern for others.
6. Demonstrates emotional, social, and physical well-being.

Program Outcomes (12–K): Language Arts

In support of District Exit Outcomes, the Language Arts Program emphasizes the use of technology and a variety of sources to develop oral and written comprehension, critical thinking and reading skills, and fluency in the communication of ideas.

1. Select and examine information from varied sources. Analyze, assess, and connect information in relation to self, other contexts and other cultures.

2. Analyze ideas, issues and information to create and demonstrate insights and understandings based on objective criteria and personal experience.

3. Use language effectively to improve one's own life and the lives of others through interpersonal communication.

4. Respect and evaluate the works of self and others to make choices for personal growth and enjoyment.

5. Investigate other points of view to expand and evaluate one's own sensitivity and insights.

6. Use technologies for producing and communicating ideas.

The chart below shows how these exit outcomes and program outcomes are related to the eleventh-grade Language Arts curriculum.

Eleventh Grade Language Arts

Program Outcomes	Program Outcomes Number	Literature	Concepts	Exit Outcomes Number	Exit Outcomes
In support of District Exit Outcomes, the Language Arts Program emphasizes the use of technology and a variety of sources to develop oral and written comprehension, critical thinking and reading skills, and fluency in the communication of ideas. 1. Select and examine information from varied sources. Analyze, assess, and connect information in relation to self, other contexts and other cultures. 2. Analyze ideas, issues and information to create and demonstrate insights and understandings based on objective criteria and personal experience. 3. Use language effectively to improve one's own life and the lives of others through interpersonal communication. 4. Respect and evaluate the works of self and others to make choices for personal growth and enjoyment. 5. Investigate other points of view to expand and evaluate one's own sensitivity and insights. 6. Use technologies for producing and communicating ideas.	5	*Moby Dick*—text excerpts and film	Search for meaning in life Good vs. evil	2b	A student: 1. Displays self-esteem as a learner and a person. 2. Exhibits cognitive learning: a. Masters essential skills. b. Learns on an extended basis. c. Progresses from low to high cognitive levels. 3. Possesses process skills: a. Solves problems. b. Communicates effectively. c. Makes decisions in a logical mature manner. d. Demonstrates accountability. e. Understands group processes. 4. Learns in a self-directed manner. 5. Shows concerns for others. 6. Demonstrates emotional, social, and physical well being.
	1	*Red Badge of Courage*	Caring of age	3c	
	2	*The Crucible*	Justice/Injustice	5	
	4	*Our Town*	Valuing life day by day	1	
	2, 5	*Grapes of Wrath* (film)	Human suffering and the strong human spirit	5	
	1	*Huckleberry Finn*—text excerpts	Dialectal differences—realism in writing	5	

Adapted from Alma Public Schools, Alma, Michigan

Adams County (Colorado) School District, No. 14 has developed a document which shows the relationship between exit outcomes, identified indicators and methods of assessment. Three examples follow:

Example A:

Exit Outcome: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the basic principles, concepts, and language of the natural sciences.

Indicators:

- Analyze a current science-related real-life development or situation using appropriate concepts of life and physical science.
- Address a scientific topic using appropriate terminology.
- Given a scientific problem, use the scientific method and design an experiment to solve it.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze and synthesize data into a solution to a given scientific problem.
- Apply the concepts of ecology to current issues in the community.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the function of the basic systems of the human body, including how they impact one's general health.

A variety of methods for assessing these outcomes is currently being developed.

Example B:

Exit Outcome: Demonstrate the ability to understand and apply basic mathematical functions and principles in real-life problem-solving situations.

Indicators:

- Use concepts from algebra and geometry to represent, analyze, and solve problems, and to complete consumer and job-related tasks.
- Appropriately use numbers for counting, measuring, comparing, ordering, scaling, locating, coding, and estimating.

- Use statistical concepts to draw conclusions from data including interpreting probability.
- Select and use appropriate processes and tools for solving math-related problems.
- Demonstrate the ability to solve math-related problems accurately.

A variety of methods for assessing these outcomes is currently being developed.

Example C:

Exit Outcome: Demonstrate the interpersonal skills necessary to be personally and professionally effective.

Indicators:

- Identify one's strengths and weaknesses in the interpersonal skills area and develop a plan of action for enhancing one or more of the strengths and addressing one or more of the weaknesses.
- Demonstrate the ability to perform effectively a variety of roles as a group member.
- Analyze and evaluate the role personal integrity plays in developing effective personal and professional relationships.

A variety of methods for assessing these outcomes is currently being developed.

Ann Arbor (Michigan) Public Schools has published *Curriculum Yellow Pages* a document which provides information about curriculum, instruction and assessment. It shows the relationship between identified course readings, standards assigned to all subject areas, assessment and support services. In addition, each subject area subsection contains four major components:

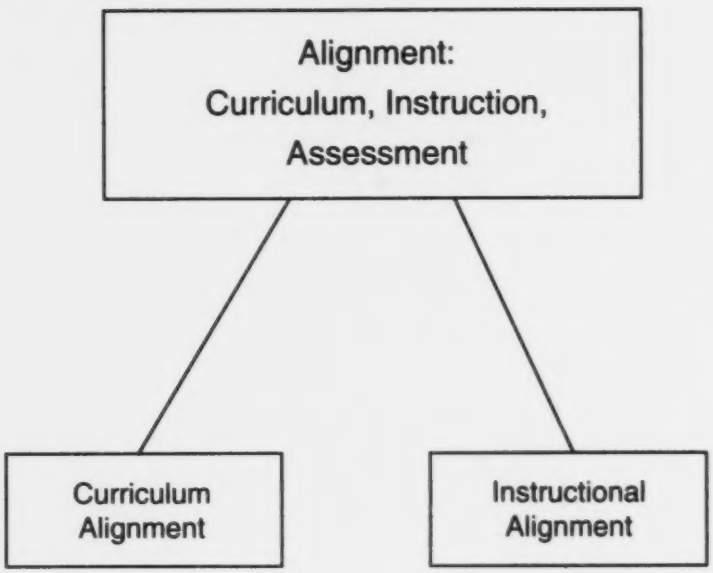
- **Curriculum**
  Philosophy
  Mission Statement
  General Student Outcomes
  Department Goals
  Common Student Learnings
  Standards: multicultural, learning/thinking skills, citizenship and ethical behavior, use of technology, communication skills
  Scope and Sequence

- **Instruction**
  Principles of Good Teaching
  Instructional Strategies
  Support Services
  Resources, Equipment and Materials
  Staff Development

- **Assessment**

- **Bibliography**

Stage D
Step 2



Step 2 — Alignment: Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment

According to Fenwick English (1990), there are at least three different types of curriculum in public schools: formal curriculum, informal curriculum, and hidden curriculum.

Formal curriculum involves the written or stated course of study. *Informal curriculum* refers to the "unrecognized and unofficial aspects of designing or delivering the curriculum." (p. 7) The informal curriculum represents the "'values' at work in selecting curriculum content" (p. 7), the personality variables of the teacher, as well as the various grouping patterns used in classrooms. The hidden curriculum is the one seldom discussed in schools. It is "the one that is taught without formal recognition": being at school on time, getting work done, being orderly and respectful. (p. 8)

English contends that there are three other curricula as well. "They are the *written curriculum,* the *taught curriculum,* and the *tested curriculum.* Most school administrators only consider the formal written, taught, and tested curricula. . . ." (p. 8) Below is a matrix that shows the relationship of the six curricula. (p. 9)

The 3 x 3 Curriculum Matrix at Work in Schools

Curriculum	Formal	Informal	Hidden
Written	Curriculum guides Textbooks	Tracking plans	Lived rules
Taught	Content taught (instruction)	Personality variables of the the teacher	Authority role of the teacher
Tested	Standardized tests Teacher tests	Test behavior	Cultural norms Socioeconomic status

(From English, p. 9)

Curriculum Alignment

> *Curriculum alignment* refers to the match or overlap between the content and format of the test and the content and format of the curriculum (or curriculum surrogate such as the textbook). The closer the fit or match, the greater the potential improvement on the test. In essence, the learner must know both the content of the curriculum and how the test will be used to measure his or her knowledge or mastery of that content.
>
> Curriculum alignment is a process to improve the match between the formal instruction that occurs in the school and the classroom and that which any test will measure. (English, p. 63)

English goes on to explain that curriculum alignment can be established through one of two processes—frontloading or backloading. Frontloading is a practice in which a teacher writes the curriculum and then determines ways to assess student learning of that curriculum. Alignment is the match between the curriculum content and the content of the assessment of learning.

Backloading is the reverse of frontloading. The content of the student assessment is determined first and the curriculum is built around the assessment. It means that the assessment becomes the curriculum. "In this case, there is always 100% alignment because the curriculum to be taught was derived from the test to be given." (p. 70) It is not uncommon to find curriculum backloading in place in districts where there is statewide testing of various aspects of the curriculum.

Instructional Alignment

According to Alan Cohen (1987), instructional alignment differs from curriculum alignment in three specific ways. Instructional alignment reflects the relationship between intended outcomes, instructional processes and instructional assessment.

Cohen adds:

> Lack of excellence in American schools is not caused by ineffective teaching, but mostly by misaligning what teachers teach, what they intend to teach, and what they assess as having been taught.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Teaching what we assess, or assessing what we teach seems embarrassingly obvious. The fundamental issue is: *What's worth teaching*? This is the same question as: *What's worth assessing*? (p. 19)

The validity of instructional alignment is cited in numerous studies. In another work, Cohen refers to a research study which concluded: "Alignment is so potent that slight variations between what's taught and what's tested can make a 40% difference in outcomes. . ." (1991, p. 57) The study notes that this appears to be true for even the highest achievers.

The Center for Outcomes-Based Education at the University of San Francisco describes a five step process to design aligned instruction. Briefly, these steps are:

1. Begin at the end—list the desired outcome (curriculum, unit or lesson) no matter how "fuzzy."
2. Rewrite the outcomes using only student performance or observable behavior terminology (i.e., delete: "knows," "loves," "recognizes;" insert: "writes," "tells," "draws," etc.)
3. List how the behavior could be assessed.
4. Design the assessment (numbers 3 and 4 will be almost identical).
5. Design the instruction, i.e., design strategies which directly teach to the behaviors expected, which are the same as the assessment items *(you teach to the test!)*.

One district developed an outcomes summary chart as an aid to aligning learner outcomes to instruction to assessment. An adaptation of this chart appears below:

Outcomes Summary

Integrated Skill/Topic:

Subject Area

Sequence/level

Exit Outcome #

Learner Outcome

Related Activities

Suggested Resources

Assessment

Access & Proc Info
Crit Think
Creativity
Life Skills
Interp Comm
Appl Tech
Career Opt
World Persp
Prin of Dem
Prin Econ Syst
Pers Eth Aesth

Domain:

Psychomotor
Cognitive
Affective

Observe Obj Test Portfolio Perf/proj

Outcomes Summary (completed)

Subject Area	Mathematics
Sequence/level	Problem solving/ 6th grade
Exit Outcome #	4
Learner Outcome	Students will translate a written mathematical problem situation
Related Activities	Group brainstorming, teacher modeling of problem solving techniques
Suggested Resources	Apple computers, texts, newspapers
Assessment	Teacher judgment of solution, student presentation

Integrated Skill/Topic:

Access & Proc Info	x
Crit Think	x
Creativity	x
Life Skills	x
Interp Comm	x
Appl Tech	x
Career Opt	
World Persp	
Prin of Dem	
Prin Econ Syst	
Pers Eth Aesth	

Domain:

Psychomotor	
Cognitive	x
Affective	

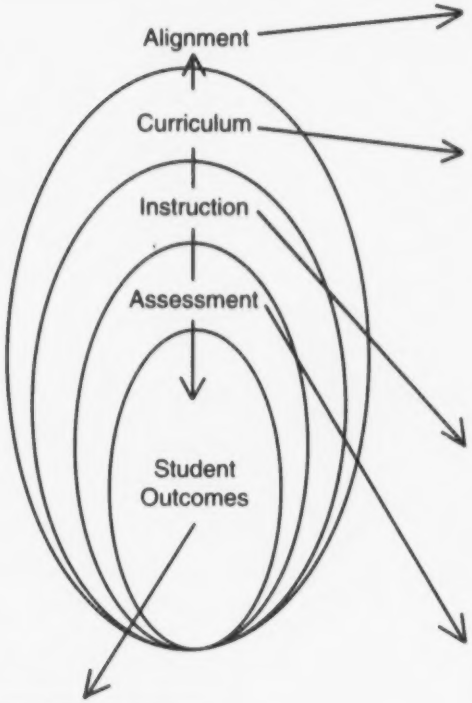
Observe	x	Obj Test		Portfolio	x	Perf/proj	x

Adapted from materials provided by Natrona County Schools, Casper, Wyoming

Ann Arbor, Michigan Public Schools has included a schema in its *Curriculum Yellow Pages* (1989, p. 45) which clearly shows the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment:

Alignment of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

The following schema demonstrates interrelatedness among curriculum, instruction and assessment. At the heart of this interrelatedness is the focus on student outcomes. Because achievement for all students is the purpose of public education, the curriculum of what is taught, the instruction of how it is provided for student learning and the assessment of when student learning occurs, must all be clearly articulated. This articulation, called alignment, is the concept that keeps curriculum, instruction and assessment moving together as a functioning whole so that the Ann Arbor Public Schools may realistically have ALL students reach essential outcomes as a result of the education offered.



Alignment

- clearly articulated relationship among curriculum, instruction, assessment and student outcomes

Curriculum

- availability of rich offerings which are equitably accessible to students
- intended to provide for ALL students
- exceeds the requirement for any one given student
- decided upon at the district level and expected to be taught according to defined objectives
- teachers' decisions on what curriculum is appropriate based on students' need to know and the extent of their experience

Instruction

- process of deliberate decision-making and action including expanded opportunities to enable students to succeed based on their needs and learning experiences

Assessment

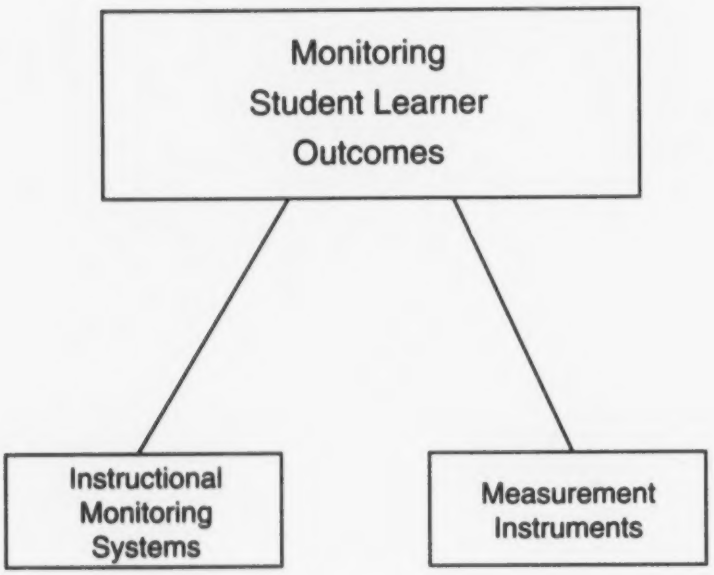
- monitoring student learning of those student outcomes selected for instruction in order to focus and adjust future instruction
- designed as an integral component of student learning with curriculum and instruction
- reflects the curriculum and instruction

Student Outcomes

- essential high quality and significant curricular objectives
- student outcomes are required for alignment curriculum, instruction and assessment—all else is support
- defines what a student should KNOW, DO and BE LIKE
- ALIGNED FOR CLARITY OF FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Stage D

Step 3



Step 3 — Monitoring Student Learner Outcomes

One of the correlates of effective schools is measurement or monitoring of academic progress. Early research found that effective schools identified student outcomes, taught toward those outcomes, and then measured the mastery of the outcomes. In other words, schools aligned the written curriculum with the taught curriculum and with the tested curriculum.

In too many school districts, there is limited alignment between the intended curriculum, the taught curriculum, and the tested curriculum. A major reason for this lack of alignment is that the district has never stated what student learner outcomes are expected.

Lezotte (1991) notes that several changes can be anticipated in the future.

> Teachers will pay much more attention to the alignment that must exist between the intended, taught, and tested curriculum. Two new questions are being stimulated by the reform movement and will dominate much of the professional educators' discourse in the second generation: "What's worth knowing?" and "How will we know when they know it?" In all likelihood, the answer to the first question will become clear relatively quickly, because we can reach agreement that we want our students to be self-disciplined, socially responsible, and just. The problem comes with the second question, "How will we know when they know it?" (p. 6)

Instructional Monitoring Systems

An instructional monitoring system is any method used to monitor pupil progress in order to provide information necessary for instructional planning and for instructional decision making. It is a curriculum tool — a method for managing the curriculum and is dependent upon a well-defined curriculum. The instructional monitoring system *cannot* be independent of the curriculum.

Another anticipated change in monitoring systems involves the use of computers:

> First the use of technology will permit teachers to do a better job of monitoring their students' progress. Second, this same technology will allow students to monitor their own learning and, where necessary, adjust their own behavior. The use of computerized practice tests, the ability to get immediate results on homework, and the ability to see correct solutions developed on the screen are a few of the available "tools for assuring student learning." (Lezotte, p. 6)

It is one thing to have a monitoring system, but quite another to have the data generated by that system available to teachers — one at a time — and to the faculty and the administration of the school in a timely fashion.

The question of who is going to be responsible for sending which data back to the schools, and on what kind of timetable, is critical. Some of the data can be most efficiently processed by central office. If districtwide testing is done on standardized measures the most efficient way to get results back to schools is to have central office do the processing. However, there may be other outcome data that are monitored at the school level where the responsibility for analysis and feedback is limited to the school site itself. *Deciding who is going to be held accountable for providing which data needs to be determined early in the school improvement process.*

The following information on creating an instructional monitoring system (IMS) has been developed by the Jackson (Mississippi) Public Schools:

Goal

The goal of the Jackson Schools' IMS is to provide the information needed to make instructional decisions which will improve and enhance the instructional program of Jackson Schools. This will be the overall goal, and the goal of each phase of the implementation of the IMS. Realization of this goal involved the following objectives:

1. to provide information not readily available with a manual IMS
2. to provide information for all personnel involved in the instructional process—teachers, principals, district administrators, parents, and pupils
3. to provide information for evaluating curriculum, test items, and the instructional process
4. to implement all of the ten functions of an IMS previously cited.

Accomplishment of all four objectives will not be achieved until all phases of the IMS are implemented. Continuous evaluation of each phase of the IMS will determine attainment of the objectives and the overall goal.

Background

In September, 1982, Jackson Public School District implemented the Common Body of Knowledge (CBOK). The implementation of a district-wide uniform curriculum demands extensive record keeping and necessitates some type of management system. During the 1982–83 and 1983–84 school years a manual system was used. This manual system proved to be a tremendous burden for classroom teachers because of the vast amount of time and paperwork involved in recording mastery or non-mastery of every objective in each subject area for each pupil — recording test scores, retest scores, and daily grades; averaging test scores and daily grades; and determining term grades according to the Jackson Schools' grading policy. A more efficient IMS was needed. Use of technology—a computerized IMS—is a response to this need.

Benefits

Provision of an efficient, effective IMS requires the use of technology. An IMS which utilizes technology will provide more information concerning pupil progress which teachers and administrators can use for instructional planning and decision-making. It will also provide that information much faster than is possible with a manual system.

Functions

An IMS which utilizes computer technology can perform the following functions:

1. score all tests for which pupil responses can be recorded on a computer scannable answer sheet
2. report group and individual pupil test results
3. monitor group and individual pupil progress
4. provide current and cumulative data on pupil achievement
5. group pupils for teaching and reteaching
6. average and report grades
7. list resources for a specific objective
8. generate unit tests
9. provide test items for specific objectives (for retesting)
10. provide for a more efficient, effective use of time for teachers and administrators.

Development

Realization of the need for an IMS which utilized technology resulted in the organization of a planning team composed of instructional and data processing personnel which developed the plan for the JPSD computerized IMS. In December, 1983, all teachers and principals in JPSD were surveyed to determine the more difficult instructional management problems. Teachers and principals were asked to indicate priorities for the development of a computerized IMS by ranking the possible functions of an IMS according to the magnitude of the problem resulting from performing the function manually. The results of this survey were used by the IMS planning team to determine the priorities for the Jackson Schools' IMS, and to develop a plan for implementation.

The difficulty of developing and implementing a total and complete IMS which performs all the functions indicated above necessitated an implementation in phases. The Jackson IMS is being implemented in phases. Phase One addressed the first two priorities, as indicated by the December, 1983, survey—scoring tests and averaging grades. The time frame for the first phase was the 1984–85 school year. The aspects of the IMS implemented during the first phase included:

1. grading all tests for which pupil responses can be recorded on a computer scannable answer sheet
2. generating test results reports for teachers and administrators as tests are graded, indicating:
   a. mastery and nonmastery of objectives
   b. pupil responses
   c. test item analysis
   d. grouping of pupils by nonmastered objectives
   e. grouping of pupils for unit retesting
3. averaging and reporting of term grades.

The second phase of IMS was implemented in September, 1985, and IMS was expanded to provide reports indicating:

1. cumulative test results for each class
2. cumulative individual pupil profiles of objectives mastered and unit test scores
3. pupils whose term grades are below average
4. pupils with nonmastered objectives
5. objective mastery percentages for each teacher, for each school, and for the district
6. frequency distribution of unit test scores for each teacher, for each school, and for the district
7. frequency distribution of term grades for each teacher, for each school, and for the district
8. CBOK objective descriptions for each course
9. yearly averages for each class.

The third phase of IMS was implemented in September, 1986. This phase included the refinement of certain IMS reports and the generation of elementary report cards in all elementary schools.

During subsequent phases of implementation, the system in each school will be connected to the host system and the IMS will be expanded to perform more functions. Evaluation of the system during each phase of implementation will provide information for areas of expansion.

Jackson (Mississippi) Schools, 1985

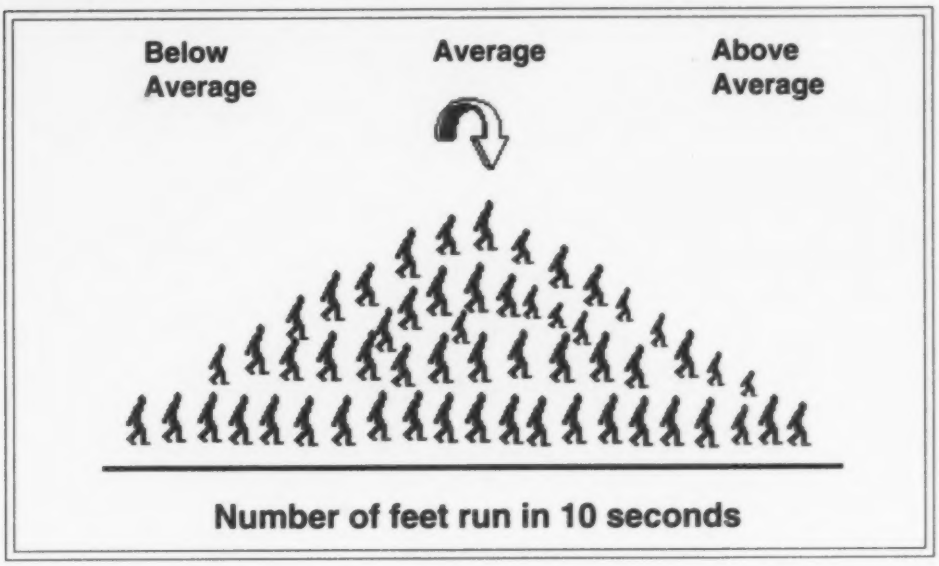
Measurement Instruments

Do norm-referenced tests fit into a monitoring system? How can criterion-referenced tests be used effectively? What other indicators of student outcomes is the district going to monitor? According to Lezotte, there will be a "shift away from standardized norm-referenced paper-pencil tests and toward curricular-based, criterion-referenced measures of student mastery. . . . the monitoring of student learning will emphasize 'more authentic assessments' of curriculum mastery. This generally means that there will be less emphasis on the paper-pencil, multiple-choice tests, and more emphasis on assessments of products of student work, including performances and portfolios." (1991, p. 6)

Norm-referenced measures. Norm-referenced tests are usually professionally prepared standardized instruments designed to measure student achievement in a variety of subject areas. The test score of a student is compared to the average score of thousands of other students of the same grade level throughout the country and is characterized as average, below average or above average.

Norm-referenced tests intended to measure curricular effectiveness are usually not adequate as the sole measure of the effectiveness of a district curriculum and/or student learning. Too often there is little alignment between what is assessed on the tests and what is taught. In a study undertaken in an eastern urban school district, there was only a 20 percent overlap between the district's written curriculum and the content of the standardized test which the district used to test student achievement. Therefore, when using standardized test scores to determine effectiveness, it is critical that an examination be made to determine curriculum overlap. However, when a norm-referenced test is matched with the instructional goals and/or objectives of a school district, it becomes more meaningful as a measurement of student achievement.

Example of norm-referenced test results on bell shaped curve:



Curricular-based, criterion-referenced measures. An objective-referenced test provides information on achievement of pupils relative to a set of instructional objectives/skills identified as an essential part of the curriculum. Test items are specifically designed to determine whether a student achieves a specific criterion. *The results are usually recorded in percent of students attaining an objective or set of objectives.*

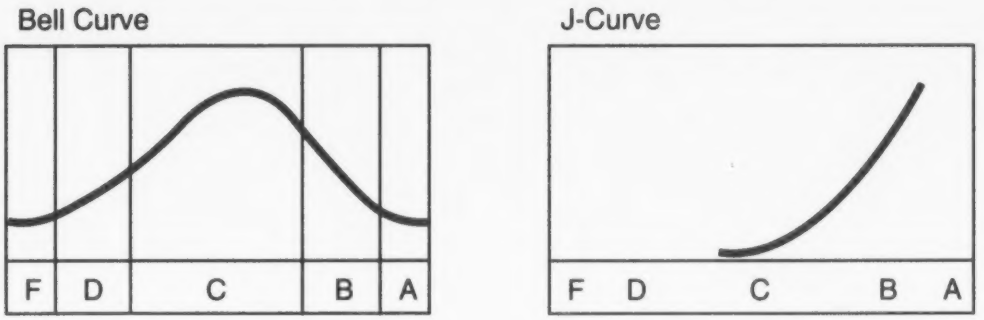
On criterion-referenced instruments, the student is not compared to other students. The score reflects what each student was or was not able to answer correctly. Such information can be readily used by teachers when structuring any needed reteaching lessons. Districts can use the results to review specific components of the instructional program in order to identify what adjustments may be needed to improve student achievement.

The use of norm-referenced test data along with criterion-referenced tests and other measures of student outcomes is acceptable. The use of norm-referenced data alone as a measurement of student achievement of curriculum is not recommended.

Example of criterion-referenced test results on bell shaped curve:

Bell curve and J-curve. The bell curve or normal curve is based on laws of probability concerning the random distribution of test scores. In other words, the performance of most individuals on a specific skill will cluster near the middle, or mean, and one can predict how many individual scores will fall on either side of the mean. The bell curve does an excellent job of predicting the distributional properties of chance events (e.g., heads vs. tails in a coin toss).

A J-curve refers to a mathematical expression that models a different educational philosophy. It states that "most kids can learn most things, most of the time," and learning may be a function of time. Unlike the traditional bell-shaped curve, which shows gradations of student achievement including failure as "normal and acceptable." The J-curve suggests that virtually all learners can master what is being taught, given time and appropriate assistance.



Alternative measures. The effective schools studies of the early '80s have been criticized because the only student outcomes studied were performances on standardized norm-referenced achievement tests. Researchers studied schools as they found them, and they found no schools using excellent criterion-referenced tests or other indicators of student achievement, such as essays, declamations, etc. The important point to remember is that the effective schools process makes no judgment about what is accepted as evidence of student mastery. However, Edmonds, Lezotte, and others have stated that schools should move to modern sophisticated assessments of students' skills and knowledge.

The limitations of norm-referenced standardized tests are well known. Teachers and administrators become concerned when the tests they are required to use do not measure, or are not aligned with, the curriculum. This concern increases when the test results are published and used to judge and compare schools.

In the book, *Expanding Student Assessment*, Vito Perone states:

> Student evaluation is basic to student growth. It demands careful, thoughtful attention. Yet what typically passes for student evaluation, what fills the public discourse, is an overarching model of assessment, built around a host of standardized tests, that doesn't get particularly close to student learning and doesn't provide teachers with much information of consequence. It is in most settings a wasteful effort that guarantees too many students a limited education and does little to increase public confidence in the schools.

> In many schools, teaching to the test has become a significant part of the curriculum. . . . Rising test scores are no longer matters for public celebration because they are not matched by widespread demonstrations of real competence. . . .
>
> [A]lmost every school district in every state now reports above-average scores on most testing programs, but people generally believe that schools have made little significant, large-scale improvement. (1991, p. vii)

Testing is too often seen as separate and distinct from instruction and learning. The implied goal of alternative measures (sometimes called authentic assessment) is for students to see themselves as active and independent learners. Authentic assessment demands that a reflectiveness be developed in students as they go about their work.

Authentic assessment is concerned with the mastery of content as well as an understanding of the learning processes involved.

> Observe a skilled teacher as she assesses students' work: looking for more than just information possessed, she depends not on discrete instances but entire performances, sampled frequently over time in the classroom. The teacher monitors students' capacities for being thoughtful, creative, curious, and self-directed. She watches for students to make use of the skills they have learned in a variety of contexts—making judgments, drawing connections to their own world and experiences, applying new understandings in thoughtful and meaningful ways. (Rieneke Zessoules and Howard Gardner in Perone, p. 48)

In his discussion of the Perone book, Lee Gerard commented: "Authentic assessment should reflect how students develop and mature in their capacities to solve sophisticated problems, make sensitive judgments, and complete complex projects. One example of how this assessment works is the student 'process-folio.' " (1992) It represents selected works that show the development of students' learning

over time. The process-folio differs from the traditional portfolio, which contains a select sample of very refined works. Gerard adds that process-folios "contain a range of quality of work to show the depth, breadth, and growth of a student's thinking. . . . enabling the student to analyze his/her own development over time." It also acts as an assessment tool for the teacher to determine a student's growth and need for further learning and instruction.

Other examples of alternative assessment measures are:

- observation
- verbal responses
- written records or logs
- drawing
- products

New programs for documenting student learning—as they are being developed in a number of school systems—differ from conventional assessment practices in several ways, as Chittenden points out in the following comparison:

New assessment practices:

- Are ongoing, cumulative
- Use open-ended formats
- Draw upon a variety of settings
- Are theory-referenced
- Are teacher-mediated

Conventional practices:

- Are annual
- Are multiple-choice
- Are based on a single setting
- Are norm-referenced
- Are teacher-proof

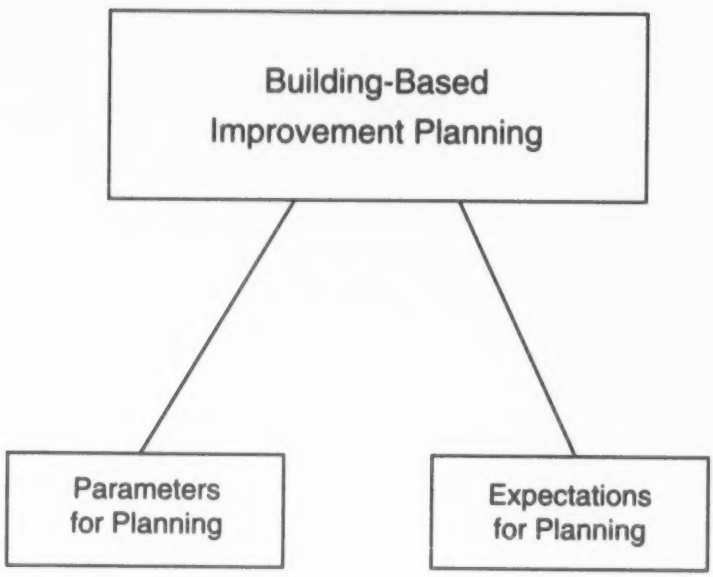
(Edward Chittenden in Perone, 1991, p. 31)

The development of assessment options is not just a matter of designing new instruments. Instead, an overall plan delineating purposeful procedures must be

developed. What kinds of information are needed? How often? What will be done with the results? What do students, teachers and parents learn from assessment efforts?

> Without adequate attention to the design and function of assessment programs, there is little reason to expect that new kinds of instruments, as embodied in portfolios, performance tasks, or other formats, will prove worth the effort. (Perone, p. 31)

Stage D
Step 4



Step 4 — Building-Based Improvement Planning*

What has been described so far are the steps involved in developing a three- to five-year *district* plan for school improvement. Inside of this plan, individual schools are expected to develop a *building-level* plan for school improvement.

As a general rule, the planning process for individual schools would not begin until the district plan is written. This can usually be completed during one school year. However, implementation of the plan may take at least three to five years—maybe longer. The district plan must be reviewed, revised, and recycled on an ongoing basis. Frequent monitoring and adjusting should occur with the district plan as well as with building-level plans.

Parameters for Planning

As an aid to building teams, the district should clearly delineate the "rules of the game" or parameters for planning. It is important that all parameters be known before individual buildings begin the planning process. This will avoid misunderstandings and controversy at the district as well as the building level.

These parameters may take a variety of forms and vary considerably from district to district. For example, one district may indicate only the date that building plans are to be submitted to the superintendent, while in another district there are numerous rules that each building team is expected to follow.

* For a detailed description of the building-based school improvement process see: Lezotte, Lawrence W., and Barbara C. Jacoby. *A Guide to the School Improvement Process based on Effective Schools Research.* Okemos, MI: Effective Schools Products, Ltd., 1990.

However, it is suggested that the district plan indicate, at a minimum, the following parameters:

1. The **format** for each building plan. If the district is going to require that building plans follow a particular form and/or include specific items, these should be provided by the district. (See pp. 186–189 for examples.)

2. **Time cycle** and **deadlines** expected of each building. The time cycles for the building planning process will vary from district to district, based on such factors as budget, standardized testing schedule, school calendar, and personal preference.

3. **Needs assessment process**. The needs assessment process includes the study of the following:

   - Analysis of student outcome data in a disaggregated form, i.e., race, gender, socioeconomic status (but not limited to these factors).
   - Analysis of school and/or parent surveys based on the characteristics or correlates of effective schools, i.e., Connecticut School survey, Glendale School survey, etc.
   - Analysis of other student outcome data, i.e., student dropout rates, attendance, discipline referrals, etc.

4. **Time for planning.** The district should show evidence of commitment and the level of priority that school improvement has in the district by offering released time and/or compensation to those involved in the planning process at the building level. The amount of released time to be given to staff should be decided at the district level, and a uniform policy should be developed for all schools.

   The following are examples of the ways in which some school districts have provided time for planning, monitoring, and evaluating building level plans.

   - released time provided by substitutes, other teachers and administrators.
   - before- and after-school meetings

- evening meetings with dinner provided
- compensated time when school is not in session
- districtwide staff development time
- mutual conference periods
- use of staff meeting time on a rotating basis
- extend lunch hours with released time (other teacher in the building covering one period)
- delayed starts
- half days for planning

5. **Responsibilities and duties** of school improvement team members.

   - The short-term duties of the team are to initiate and sustain the discourse on school improvement.
   - The long-term duties of the school improvement team are to act as trustees of the school mission by evaluating whether the school is moving toward the mission—looking inward and asking, "Are we doing what we said we were going to do? Is what we are doing actually working for all our students?"

Expectations for Planning

The following set of guidelines is adapted from an example of how one district (Prince George's County Public Schools, Maryland) attempted to assist building teams by indicating district expectations.

1. **Orient staff and provide opportunities for on going staff development**

   The entire staff should understand major findings of the effective schools research. Additionally, the staff should understand the commitment of the entire school system to the effective schools process, and the nature of local school involvement in the process. Procedures must be in place to orient staff new to the process and to define their role with respect to the process.

2. **Develop a school mission**

The school improvement team at the building level should draft a school mission statement that reflects the district mission. The mission provides the direction for the work of the school and expresses the shared values of the staff.

3. **Form school improvement team**

The school improvement team should be representative of all components of the staff. Parent involvement is highly recommended. The team has as its primary responsibility working collaboratively with the principal and staff to guide school improvement efforts through analyzing needs and initiating schoolwide discussion on school improvement issues related to the school's improvement plan.

4. **Conduct needs assessment**

The needs assessment on which the school improvement plan is based includes the following activities:

- Analyzing student outcome data (e.g., standardized and criterion-referenced test results; grade distributions, attendance, dropouts, suspensions, course enrollments) in a disaggregated format. Included among the data to be analyzed is all pertinent information from the Maryland School Performance Program data-based areas.

- Analyzing results of a correlate assessment survey to ascertain how the school is perceived in relation to the seven correlates of effective schools.

5. **Establish goals**

Each school, working through the school improvement team, identifies school improvement goals unique to that school. School improvement goals should address the needs of the school and should reflect the quality and equity focus

of the effective schools process. By continuing to highlight improved student outcomes, school personnel demonstrate that high levels of learning for all students are the school's major priority.

6. Develop school improvement plan

The school improvement team identifies objectives, strategies and actions needed to reach established goals. A long-range school improvement plan is developed which includes goals, objectives, actions or strategies to reach objectives, persons responsible for implementing the actions, materials and resources needed, and formative and summative evaluation strategies.

Each school improvement plan should include the following components:

- School mission statement
- Long-range goals related to the quality and equity focus of the effective schools process as described in the district and school mission statement
- Objectives for the current year that are assigned to help reach long-range goals
- Strategies and activities that will be implemented to reach identified objectives, including staff development plans
- Personnel responsible for initiation implementation of each activity or strategy
- Resources and materials needed from within the school, as well as from area and central offices
- Formative evaluation strategies to assess progress throughout the year
- Summative evaluation strategies, expressed in terms of student outcomes wherever possible, to determine if objectives have been reached

7. Format for school improvement plan

The format to be used should be discussed with the assistant superintendent. (Examples of suggested formats were enclosed with the guidelines.)

8. Disseminate school improvement plan

The completed plan is shared with all members of the school staff, parents, and with those members of the community who interact with the school. Aspects of the plan are shared with students, as appropriate.

9. Implement school improvement plan

Adjustments to the school improvement plan should be made, as needed, by the school improvement team. Use of the formative and summative evaluation strategies identified for each goal or objective will signal when adjustments may be needed.

Another district has indicated the district and school improvement team responsibilities through a chart format:

District Team Responsibilities—District Plan

	Goals	Implementation	Evaluation
Board of Education	Decide	Observe	Decide
Central Admin.	Advise	Advise	Advise

School Improvement Team Responsibilities—Building Plan

	Goals	Implementation	Evaluation
Team	Decide	Advise	Decide
Faculty and Principal	Advise	Decide	Advise

Adapted from original

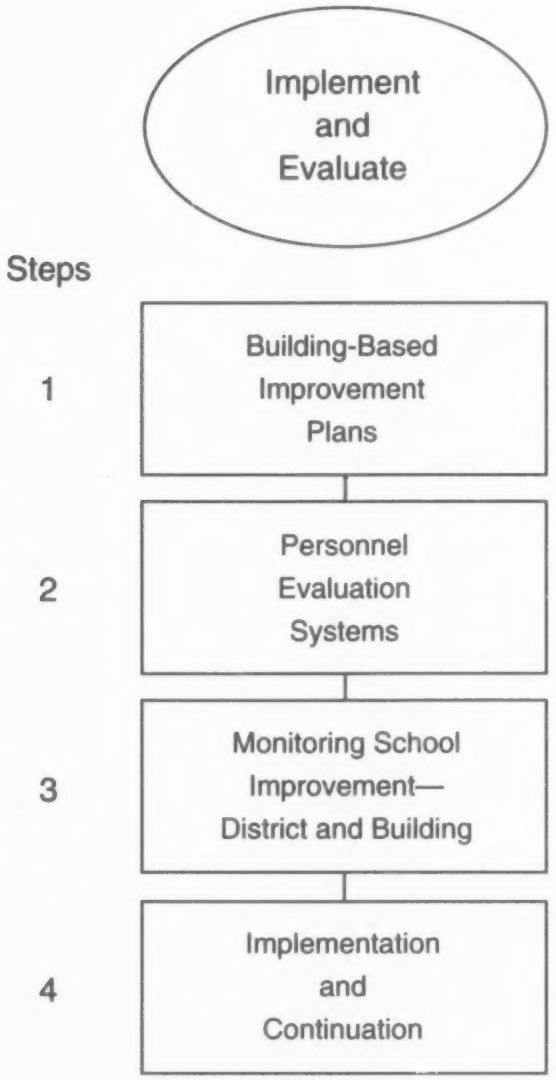
Words of advice

- Districts usually ask that draft copies of each building school improvement plan be submitted to the superintendent and/or associate superintendent before the end of the school year. The time line should be such that adequate time is provided *during the school year* for any needed revisions.
- Final copies of each school plan should be provided to the superintendent and each school board member. The plans clearly indicate the direction each school will be taking during the next three to five years.
- Some districts have asked each building team to provide parents with a copy (or modification) of the building plan.
- Districts which have been successful with school improvement efforts have made it clear to all personnel that *every* employee has a responsibility for implementing both the district and building school improvement plans. This willingness to support the plans—both verbally and through appropriate actions—is achieved through early involvement and ongoing commitment.

School District Improvement Planning Process

Stage E — Implement and Evaluate

"How will the district know it got there?"



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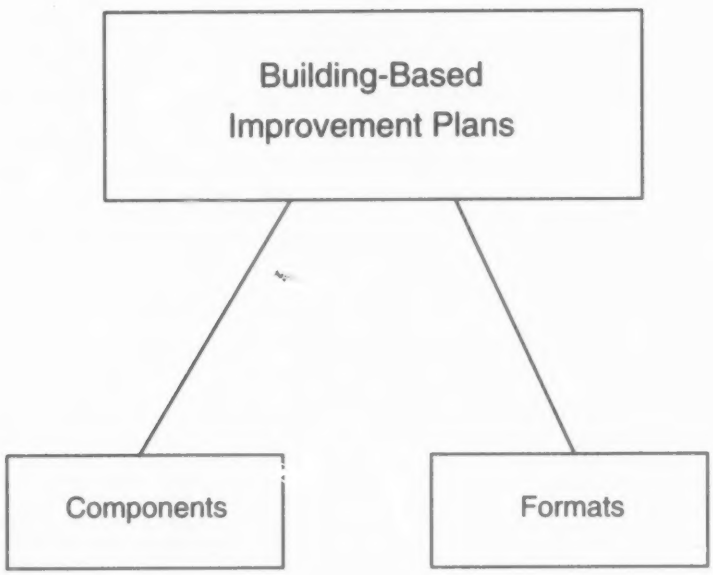
Stage E
Step 1



Step 1 — Building-Based Improvement Plans

It is the responsibility of each building school improvement team to develop a plan for school improvement. This plan should have several attributes. It should be:

- research based
- data driven
- goal directed
- student-outcome oriented
- long-term in nature

The purpose of this plan is to improve both the quality and distribution of student outcomes.

Components*

A building school improvement planning process becomes operational through the efforts of the school improvement team. The team, with the principal as a team member, works with staff to create and achieve consensus on the various parts of the school improvement plan. Because needs based on data will vary from school to school, no building plan will look exactly like another. However, it is suggested that the following components be included as part of the completed plan:

- Building mission
- Student outcome(s)
- Evidence of need
- Strategies and activities per outcome
- Formative and summative data per strategy and outcome

* For a detailed description of the building-based school improvement process see: Lezotte, Lawrence W., and Barbara C. Jacoby. *A Guide to the School Improvement Process based on Effective Schools Research.* Okemos, MI: Effective Schools Products, Ltd., 1990.

- Personnel responsible
- Time line
- Monitoring schedule
- Resources needed
- Evidence of success

Plan checklist

The following questions will be helpful for building and district personnel to use as a checklist against which a school plan can be developed and/or modified.

Part I—Cover Page

- Are the school and district names clearly displayed?
- Is it obvious that the document is the school improvement plan?
- Are the names of the school improvement team members listed?
- Does the cover show the date of the plan's completion and the date it received formal faculty approval?
- Is the school mission printed on the cover?

Part II—Needs Assessment

A. Student Outcome Data

- Have student outcome data been collected and analyzed?
- Has the data analysis been presented in an understandable format?
- Have the data been presented in a disaggregated way?
- Do the student outcome data reflect data collected and analyzed for the past two to three years?
- Does the analysis provide an interpretive narrative about student achievement?

B. Staff Perception Data

- Does the needs assessment section contain a brief description of the school's needs assessment process?
- Does the process description indicate *what* information was collected? from whom? and when?
- How do staff perceive their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the characteristics of effective schools?

Part III—Goals and Improvement Objectives

- Are the goals and improvement objectives written in student outcome terms?
- Is there a clear relationship between the needs assessment data, the disaggregated analyses, and the goals and objectives?

Part IV—Action Plan

- Are there implementation strategies for each of the improvement objectives?
- Are the strategies supported by research and/or best practices?
- Do these strategies logically relate to the improvement objective?
- Does the plan specify *who* is responsible for each strategy, and who will be involved?
- Does the plan specify *when* the strategy will be implemented?
- Is there an evaluation standard by which each accomplishment will be judged?
- Are the strategies consistent with the effective schools framework, i.e., basic premises, correlates, etc.?
- Does the plan include a step to learn the current research and the best practices of the profession regarding the problem being addressed?

- Are the staff development implications of the plan set forth?
- Do the action plans attempt to address issues over which the building has no control? If so, do the action plans imply that the building will become effective only if others respond positively to the plan?

Part V—Ownership and Commitment

- Does the plan include a communication process to be used to present the plan and to give progress reports to faculty, parents, central office staff, students, etc.?
- Does the plan indicate how faculty approval will be sought and attained?

Part VI—Overall Summary

- To what extent do the objectives of the building plan help the school to accomplish its mission and be true to its beliefs?
- To what extent do the objectives of the building plan help the school to accomplish the district's objectives and be true to the district's beliefs.

Formats

There is no one plan format which is better to use than any other. The following are examples of formats which building staffs have used successfully. Note that all contain the previously suggested components but are different in several ways. One draft plan is "filled in."

Year _____

Goal _____

_____

_____

Evidence of Need _____

_____

_____

Student Outcome _____

_____

_____

Evidence of Success _____

_____

_____

Strategies	Person Responsible for Implementing Strategy	Person Responsible for Measuring Progress of the Strategy	Resources Needed	Dates of Activity		Assessment Date(s) (When is progress to be measured?)	Criteria for Outcome Attainment & How Meaured (How will we know the objective was attained?)
				Start	End		
1)							
2)							
3)							

Adapted from Williamston Community Schools, Williamston, Michigan

1992–93 School Improvement Plan

School: _____ **Chairperson(s):** _____ **Principal:** _____

Goal Area: _____ **Continuation of 91–92 Goal Area:** _____

Correlate: _____

Evidence of Need (1992 Data)	*Improvement Objective*	*Evidence of Success*

Strategies (List all of the activities that will help you meet your improvement objectives.)	Person(s) Responsible for Implementing Strategy	Person(s) Responsible for Measuring Progress	Resources Needed (Include staff development needs.)	Dates of Activity		Assessment Date(s)	Success Indicators
				Start	End		

School Year: 1992–93

"Teaching for Learning for All"
BUILDING IMPROVEMENT PLAN
for

_____
(School)

Long-Term Educational Goal: Three to five years and monitorable, if not measurable
Diagnostic Data: Include student achievement data, archival data, correlate assessment data, and informal data
Rationale: Justification for the Long-Term Educational Goal
Objective: One year and measurable
Evaluation Design: Account for achievement of objective

Activities	Resources	CIP Grant Request Amount	Person Responsible	Target Date	Monitor/Adjust	Completion Evidence
Proposed actions for achieving the one year measurable objective.	People, money, and/or time needed to achieve proposed activity or or activities.	Those aspects of resources that may require funding beyond the school's regular allocated budget.	Limited to a person who is responsible for achievement of the activity.	A specific date(s) should be projected for completion of each activity.	Principal and/or person responsible will use this space for ongoing monitoring and adjusting of each activity.	Documentation of process and/or product which clearly provide support for achievement of activity.

Summative Assessment: Principal will write a statement linking achievement of the OBJECTIVE to the EVALUATION DESIGN for the objective. The principal will also write a statement or statements linking the objective and its achievement to the LONG-TERM EDUCATIONAL GOAL and progress towards its ultimate achievement.

Adapted from Spring Branch Independent School District, Houston, Texas

School Year: 1992–93

"Teaching for Learning for All"
BUILDING IMPROVEMENT PLAN
for

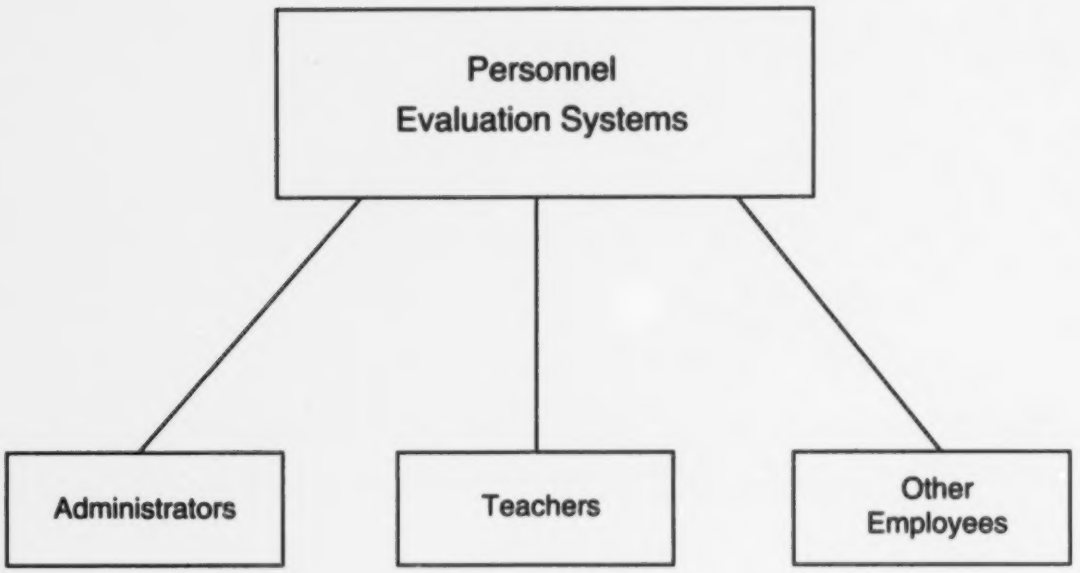
Any Junior High
(School)

Long-Term Educational Goal: Any Junior High's current dropout rate will be reduced 6% over the next three school years.
Diagnostic Data: Academic Excellence Indicator System Report indicates a dropout rate of 11% for AJH.
Rationale: Given the need to have students in school in order to teach for learning, it is imperative that AJH reduce its dropout rate so that the school meets state standards for a successful educational institution.
Objective: Any Junior High will reduce its current dropout rate by 2% by the end of the 1992–93 school year.
Evaluation Design: Dropout data will be examined for a 2% reduction (1991–92 vs. 1992–93). The AEIS Report for October of 1993 will be utilized for this evaluation

Activities	Resources	CIP Grant Request Amount	Person Responsible	Target Date	Monitor/Adjust	Completion Evidence
Develop and implement a prospectus for faculty involvement in home visits during the 1992–93 school year. The prospectus will include, but will not be limited to: (a) purpose, (b) background data and information, (c) definitions, (d) who will be visited, (e) techniques /methods of the visit, (f) who will visit, and (g) what follow-up will take place.	(a) CAT, (b) Library Media Specialist, (c) Total Staff (in brainstorming), (d) Selected central office staff, (e) Community members, (f) Travel budget for visits to successful home visit programs, and (g) Training budget for our school's home visitors.	(a) Travel budget—$1,400.00; (b) Training budget—$1,000.00 (consultant and materials)	Ms. Jones, Counselor	(a) 8/31/92 for development of prospectus; (b) full implementation of home visits by end of 92–93.	(This space will be used throughout the school year as needed to monitor and adjust activities.)	(a) Prospectus document; (b) Implementation records

Summative Assessment: (This space will be used when linking achievement of the OBJECTIVE to the EVALUATION DESIGN for the objective. This space will also be used for linking the objective and its achievement to the LONG-TERM EDUCATIONAL GOAL and progress towards its ultimate achievement.)

Stage E
Step 2



Step 2 — Personnel Evaluation Systems

A district must come to terms with the issue of who is responsible for school improvement. Will there be persons at the district and building levels who will be held accountable through their annual evaluations for the development and monitoring of the district and building improvement plans? Are these responsibilities written into the appropriate job descriptions? Is a knowledge of school improvement based on effective schools research a necessary prerequisite for employment in the district? Is advancement on the salary scale and/or continued employment connected in any way to the building and district school improvement plans?

A personnel evaluation program that centers on instructional improvements should exist in the district for both teachers and administrators. Personnel evaluation, except in cases of identified procedures for dismissal, should be viewed as an important part of staff growth and development in the school district for administrators, teachers and noncertified staff. In many districts, the superintendent is charged with the responsibility for developing the district plan, an assistant superintendent is responsible for the implementation of the district plan, and building principals are responsible for the development and implementation of building plans. The personnel evaluation system should be tied to the defined role responsibilities in the school improvement process. The evaluation process should be used to reinforce what an employee is accomplishing that is positively aligned to the district mission and beliefs. It should also be used to help assess what activities and behaviors should be modified or changed in accordance with these role expectations.

Administrators

The evaluation system for administrators should be the first one reviewed after the district school improvement planning process is completed and the district plan is being implemented.

The leadership roles and expectations should be clearly defined in the district plan. Later, in the implementation process, the evaluation system of all school administrators should be revised or established to reflect these leadership roles and expectations. The leadership role of *all* administrators is important, but the leadership of the building principals is key. According to Eaker, Ranells, and DuFour (1991), "The leadership skills of the principal are critical to a school improvement initiative. Much has been written about the characteristics, traits, and skills of the ideal instructional leader. Suffice it to say, the principal must be able to communicate, motivate, empower others, keep things in perspective, and do these things with warmth and humor . . ." (p. 12)

It is suggested that an administrative evaluation system:

1. be aligned with the district mission
2. be performance based
3. provide a standard set of descriptive, research-based criteria for effective leadership in promoting the mission
4. be divided into evaluation for improvement and evaluation for termination of employment
5. include formative and summative procedures
6. include professional and school improvement commitments or goals
7. be undertaken in an atmosphere of helpfulness and collegiality

Teachers

The evaluation system for teachers probably will not be realigned in most school districts until the personnel evaluation system for administrators has been revised and in place for at least a year. Changing the personnel evaluation for teachers is usually a negotiated item between the board of education and the teacher bargaining unit. If changes are needed, it is important for the administrative leaders and the school board to continue to pursue efforts in this area. Over time, teachers become familiar with the benefits of the school improvement activities for themselves and their students. Then, matching the teacher evaluation system to the instructional mission of the school will become more reasonable and acceptable.

The teacher evaluators should be trained in effective instruction, clinical supervision, and coaching and counseling skills. There should be continuity of procedures and interrater reliability throughout the district. According to Bill Rauhauser, school improvement specialist, the following areas should be included when a teacher evaluation system is reviewed or revised:

1. Personnel appraisal system is performance based.
2. Personnel appraisal system provides a standard set of descriptive, research based criteria for effective teaching.
3. Personnel appraisal system is divided into evaluation for improvement and evaluation for termination of employment.
4. Personnel appraisal system includes formative and summative procedures.
5. Personnel appraisal system includes professional improvement commitments (goals).
6. There is interrater reliability among the teacher observers in the district.
7. There is a climate of collegiality between evaluator and teacher.

(cited in Lezotte and Maksimowicz, 1987, pp. 95–96)

Other Employees

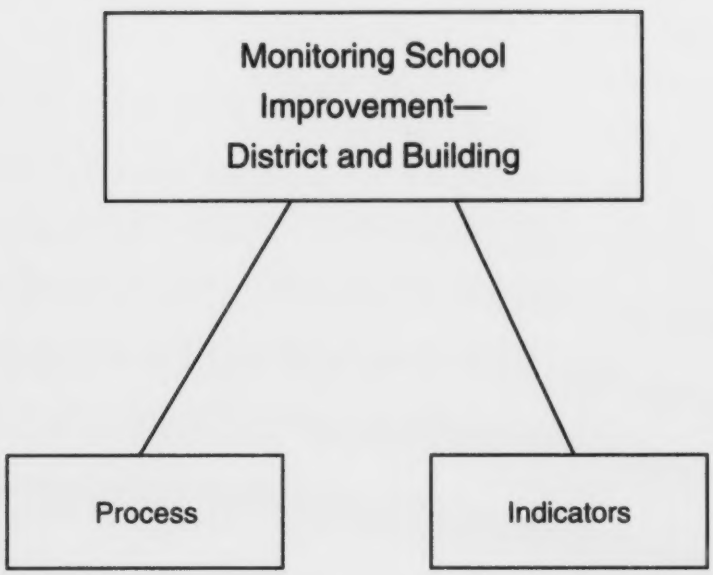
"There are no unimportant adults in the life of a child," Ron Edmonds often reminded educators.

If central office personnel believe this statement, then shouldn't they hold *all* district employees accountable for living the district mission? If the district mission is to make it possible for all students to learn, then bus drivers, secretaries, cafeteria workers, crossing guards, and all others working in the school have roles to play and responsibilities to fulfill. Just as teachers and administrators are evaluated on the successful fulfillment of their responsibilities, so should the other adults who are charged with specific student-related duties.

The following areas should be included when a certified personnel evaluation system is reviewed or revised:

1. Personnel appraisal system is performance based.
2. Personnel appraisal system provides a standard set of descriptive, research based criteria.
3. Personnel appraisal system is divided into evaluation for improvement and evaluation for termination of employment.
4. Personnel appraisal system includes formative and summative procedures.
5. Personnel appraisal system includes professional improvement commitments (goals).
6. Personnel appraisal system should be undertaken in an atmosphere of helpfulness and collegiality.

Stage E
Step 3



Step 3 — Monitoring School Improvement— District and Building

In concept, monitoring is simple: set milestones, measure results, and follow up. But enacting the concept takes time and effort. According to John Doyle of Hewlett-Packard, "You have to define what you plan to measure, you need a system that measures, and then you have to read the bloody meter." (quoted in Waterman, 1990, p. 64)

The development of a district school improvement plan is a process that can readily be separated into parts or chunks. The completion of each chunk becomes a milestone to be monitored or measured. One local district created a unique way of monitoring chunks of its plan development through the use of a wall chart. The planning steps and suggested time line were across the top of the chart. The various strategies for implementing these steps were posted below each step. Fastened to the chart were color-coded cards representing the individual or team responsible. A large red arrow fastened on a string to the top of the chart was used to track progress. As a strategy was completed, the arrow was moved forward.

According to Doyle, reading the "bloody meter" occurs as progress is charted. Cards to the left of the arrow show which strategies are behind schedule and who is "holding up the show." Cards to the right indicate the work yet to be done. After the meter reading, something needs to be done with the findings. It is suggested that after each reading, a report be made by the district team to the school board at each regularly scheduled board meeting. The report should indicate what was achieved, what is yet to be done, and when the board can expect another update. A similar progress report should be made to staff and the community. The regular reporting of

progress is critical to the success of any project or planning process. As the plan moves forward, a sense of its value is again reinforced.

Another approach was taken by Frederick County, Maryland, where the board of education directed the superintendent of schools to issue an annual report summarizing progress toward meeting the adopted district improvement goals. This report from the 1988–89 planning year was to serve as a baseline for evidence of district and school improvement and to highlight any results of the planning and training year. It is expected that the school improvement process will be monitored and a progress report issued annually.

Process

Monitoring school improvement progress is a process that is being utilized by more and more districts in order to validate school improvement efforts at the district and building levels. The process focuses on previously determined indicators of school effectiveness. It is most common for monitoring systems to include at least four pieces of evidence: (1) student outcomes, (2) areas of ongoing strength and concern, (3) perceptions of the presence/absence of the correlates, and (4) perceptions of stakeholder groups regarding the effectiveness of the school improvement process.

Monitoring progress is one of the most difficult and complex activities for those engaged in change "to get right." It is frequently either misused, or not done at all, and is often the last part of the school improvement process to be put in place. Fullan points out: "In the early stages of attempts at change, people are usually wary of gathering information. On the other hand, it is revealing to note that once an improvement process . . . is underway, teachers and others close to implementation

are those most insistent on gathering and examining the results of their efforts. Good change processes develop trust, relevance, and the desire to get better results." (1991, p. 87)

Indicators

Monitoring data involves the collection of student outcome data, staff interviews; parent, school board and community interviews; observations in classroom, schools and central office. The intent of the process is to assist schools in "examining the degree to which their school improvement efforts have established quality and equity within the school, and to identify ways in which the effective schools process can help the school reach these goals." (Prince George's County Public Schools, 1989)

The monitoring process in Prince George's County, Maryland, utilizes an Audit/ Advisory Team, which makes school visits in order to conduct one-on-one and small-group interviews and examines student outcome data. The team synthesizes the data, examines the schools performance based on the previously determined indicators, identifies areas of exemplary performance, and makes recommendations for revisions of the school improvement plan.

This monitoring process utilizes certain indicators of school effectiveness. A sample of these indicators is shown below. For additional examples of such indicators, see Appendix E, pp. 248–278.

Part I — Student Outcomes

A. Achievement Indicators

Elementary Schools (report outcomes annually)

- Percent of students achieving in reading at or above grade level is indicated by placement in reading materials and performance on diagnostic measures
- Percent of students achieving in mathematics at or above grade level, as indicated by placement in mathematics materials and performance on diagnostic measures
- Percent of students whose June criterion-referenced test (CRT) results in reading and mathematics reach or exceed 70 percent on each domain
- Percent of students advanced to a higher group in reading or mathematics during the school year
- Percent of students promoted, by grade level

Middle Schools (report outcomes over a three-year period)

- Percent of students enrolled in Pre-Algebra and Algebra I in Grades 7 and 8
- Percent of students enrolled in foreign language classes, by grade level
- Percent of students whose June CRT results reach or exceed 70 percent on each domain
- Percent of students receiving awards or recognition for growth in academic achievement, by grade level
- Percent of students in feeder high schools who pass functional tests in Grade 9

- Evidence that grade distributions are used to analyze and improve student achievement

- Percent of students promoted, by grade level

High Schools (report outcomes over a three-year period)

- Percent of students enrolled in higher level courses over a three-year period

- Percent of students whose June CRT results reach or exceed 70 percent on each domain

- Evidence that grade distributions are used to analyze and improve student achievement

- Percent of students applying to post-secondary institutions

- Percent of graduates receiving honors and awards by grade level

- SAT results over a three-year period

- Percent of students promoted at each grade level

- Percent of students who pass functional test on first administration

- Percent of students who pass functional test by graduation

B. **Participation Indicators**

Elementary and Secondary (report outcomes over a three-year period)

- Percent of student attendance

- Percent of teacher attendance

- Percent of suspensions

- Percent of expulsions
- Percent of students receiving awards for making contributions to school and/or community (e.g., community service participation)

Secondary Only

- Percent of students, by grade level, with a GPA of 2.0 or better
- Percent of student participation in extracurricular activities
- Percent of participation in PSAT and SAT testing opportunities, by grade level
- Percent of student dropouts

Adapted from Prince George's County Public Schools,
Effective Schools Audit Process, 1987

The second part of the Prince George's County monitoring process documented the presence or absence of effective schools correlates. Specific behaviors for each correlate were listed, as well as suggested types of evidence. The third part measured perceptions of the school improvement process with a survey of staff and school improvement team members.

School and district profiles

As part of the district's school improvement process, Adams County School District #14, Colorado, has developed an *Achievement Profile* of each of its schools. The profile is a "tool to help schools identify areas in which administration, teachers, building accountability committees and parents can plan for improvement. The standards are goals set beyond current performance to allow for a creative stretch of the limits of schools' talents and resources."

These annual profiles are printed in two booklets—elementary level and secondary level. The contents contain verbal and graphic descriptions indicating how well the district is doing in specific areas, the definition of these areas, the district's standard for each area, students targeted, specific area results, special comments, and the district overview.

Each profile is divided into twelve sections:

1. Teacher and administrator roster
2. Planning and special achievements
3. Attendance rate (high schools include graduation and dropout rate)
4. Turnover rate
5. Retention rate
6. Mastery of curriculum objectives (disaggregated by gender and ethnic group)
7. Writing assessment results
8. Spoken language assessment results
9. Standardized test results
10. Parent satisfaction survey results
11. Student perception survey results
12. Employee perception survey results

Some examples from the booklets are presented below:

Writing Assessment

Definition: Writing Assessment measures the quality of student writing relative to mechanics and thinking processes. The assessment samples students at each level and evaluates writing skills. The scale ranges from a 1 (lowest) to a 4 (highest) in quality of writing ability for age and grade.

Standard: 90 percent of students will receive 2s, 3s, and 4s by 1995; 50 percent will receive 3s and 4s.

Students: All District 14 schools.

Results: _____ Elementary School

Grade 4: **Persuasive Writing**

Percent receiving a 2, 3, or 4	66
Percent receiving a 3 or 4	3

Writing Assessment

Definition: Writing Assessment measures the quality of student writing relative to mechanics and thinking processes. The assessment samples students at each level and evaluates writing skills. The scale ranges from a 1 (lowest) to a 4 (highest) in quality of writing ability for age and grade.

Standard: 90 percent of students will receive 2s, 3s, and 4s by 1995; 50 percent will receive 3s and 4s.

Students: All District 14 schools.

Results: _____ High School

Persuasive Writing

Percent receiving a 2, 3, or 4	96
Percent receiving a 3 or 4	38

Employee Perception Survey

Definition: An annual survey is conducted within each school to determine areas for school improvement. Two areas are reported in the Achievement Profile—school climate and employee satisfaction. School climate refers to the general feeling or tone of the school, and employee satisfaction measures characteristics that make working in the school professionally rewarding. Each measure is based on a scale of 1–10, with a score of 7 or above indicating significant positive response.

Standard: The district goal has not been set for this area.

Target: All District 14 employees

Results: _____ Middle School

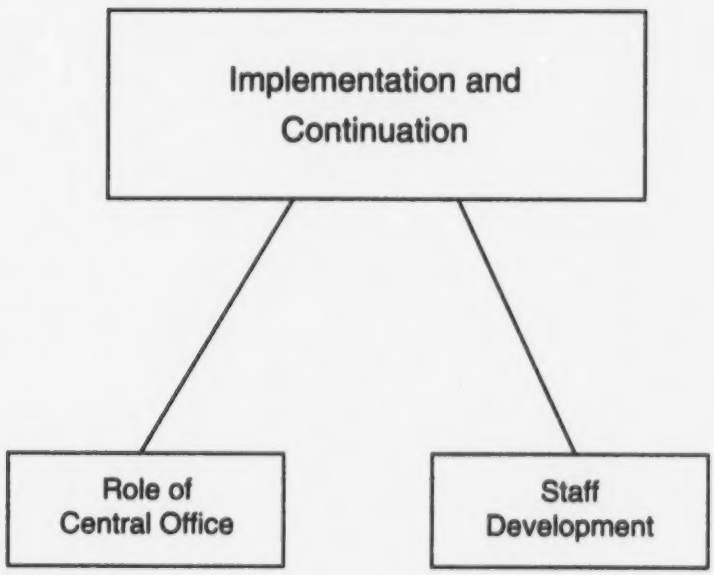
Certified:	
School Climate:	5.22
Employee Satisfaction Index:	5.28
Classified:	
School Climate:	5.07
Employee Satisfaction Index:	5.19

District Overview

Some of the areas identified in the Achievement Profile are also reported as a total number for the district as a whole. These figures provide a global view of the school district and indicate a general direction the district is moving.

Attendance:	92.3 percent
Turnover rate:	29 percent
Parent Satisfaction Survey Overall Grade:	61 percent A+B
Standardized testing:	44 NCE Total Battery

Stage E
Step 4



Step 4 — Implementation and Continuation

Role of Central Office

Initiation of school improvement efforts (as well as most other change processes) never occurs without an advocate (or advocates). The efforts of the superintendent and other district administrators are usually the most critical in initiating and/or supporting school improvement. Even when the source of school improvement initiation is elsewhere in the system, perhaps at the building level, a powerful determining factor is how the superintendent and others in central office react. *The superintendent and other district administrators are such powerful influences on change that they can advance or block progress in school improvement efforts.* "If they take it seriously, the change stands a chance of being implemented. If they do not, it has little chance of going beyond the . . . classroom or school." (Fullan, pp. 197–198)

Implementation refers to what really happens as opposed to what was supposed to have happened. Fullan emphasizes that the success or failure of the implementation and continuation of school improvement efforts depends upon the reactions and actions of the superintendent and central office staff. The truth of whether a change such as school improvement has been taken seriously by central office becomes very obvious at the implementation stage. Initiated changes will go nowhere unless central office staff "provide specific implementation pressure and support." (p. 198)

For district school improvement efforts to be implemented and continued, Fullan observes that the district superintendent and central office staff must lead a process that:

1. tests out the need and priority of the change;
2. determines the potential appropriateness of the particular innovation for addressing the need;
3. clarifies, supports, and insists on the role of principals and other administrators as central to implementation;
4. ensures that direct implementation support is provided in the form of available quality materials, in-service training, one-to-one technical help, and opportunity for peer interaction;
5. allows for certain redefinition and adaptation of the innovation;
6. communicates with and maintains the support of parents and the school board;
7. sets up an information-gathering system to monitor and correct implementation problems; and
8. has a realistic time perspective. (p. 198)

In his discussion of these factors, Fullan notes:

> The above set of factors does not occur by accident. Someone at the district level must know what he or she is doing, and plan for them to happen. The leader's *conceptual understanding of the dynamics of organization, the processes of change, and the people in his or her jurisdiction* represents the most generative (or degenerative, if it is missing) source of ideas about what goes into a plan and what steps have to be taken when things go wrong. Successful administrators operate implicitly or explicitly from a basic set of principles—a theory of change. A theory of change . . . combines knowledge about factors that inhibit or facilitate change and knowledge about how to influence or alter these factors in more favorable directions. No technical checklist, even if religiously followed, can come close to matching the power of knowing the dynamics of social change. Dealing effectively with the implementation of educational change involves more than anything else a way of thinking—a feel for the change process. (p. 198)

Continuation of school improvement efforts

The continuation or institutionalization of school improvement needs to be planned. Furthermore, it must be planned as part of the school improvement process rather than thought of as an add-on after the process is underway. While implementation is a major factor to be dealt with, the question of continuation should be considered in its own right.

Communication. The district superintendent, more than any other individual in the district, sets the tone concerning continuation. S/he must try to accomplish the impossible—that is, think of "everything" related to the successful implementation and continuation of school improvement and communicate successfully with all stakeholder groups! Because change causes different reactions from all those involved, there will very likely be misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Therefore, the effective superintendent is one who constantly works at communication because it is known that communication problems are natural and inevitable.

Budget. Research into reasons for the successful implementation of change projects indicates that implementation and continuation depend on attention given to funding. District administrators and the school board put early and continuing effort into the incorporation of the project into the district's budget. Often they create a separate line item for school improvement.

> [I]f implementation has been well established in terms of teacher mastery and commitment, an innovation has more of a basis for continuation. . . . if the change project depends on external or other special funds (as many do), what the administrator does and does not do to plan for continuation is crucial. (Fullan, pp. 199–200)

Administrator turnover. Turnover, whether through resignation, retirement or transfer, can take a toll on change. The constancy or "steady hand on the helm" of a district and school building is critical until school improvement efforts have become institutionalized. Some districts have attempted to maintain the continuation of leadership by agreeing not to reassign building principals for three to four years while school improvement efforts are becoming firm.

Likewise, superintendents will often agree to provide the direction for school improvement until it becomes obvious that the process is becoming institutionalized. At this point, when a new leader is to be hired, the school board will consider only those who share the commitment to school improvement. However, when a school district experiences frequent changes in the superintendent position, "it is virtually impossible to establish an effective change process." (Fullan, p. 200)

Staff Development

An effective school improvement process means change. An effective staff development program brings about change. Therefore, the merging of the process of school improvement with the district's staff development program is the logical way to bring about change in a systematic and purposeful way.

One of the key beliefs of effective schools is that the people in the schools are already doing the best they know to do, given the conditions under which they find themselves. To change what people know, it will be necessary to invest more heavily in the personal and professional development of all district employees. The typical school district in the United States today spends less than 2 percent of its resources on the renewal and upgrading of its people. Businesses and industries in the private sector could not survive if they spent so little on renewal.

Most superintendents and other administrators give a general endorsement to the value of staff development. However, a general endorsement means little without an understanding of the characteristics which separate ineffective from effective staff development efforts.

Successful staff development

The Frederick County (Maryland) Board of Education staff development program has been developed within a conceptual framework of effective staff development principles. These principles support the belief that a staff development program should:

- Support individual schools in their school improvement efforts.
- Foster an understanding of change as a process and assist instructional staff in managing these changes.
- Promote collaboration among all instructional departments of the school system.
- Provide opportunities which reflect adult learning theory and professional development stages.
- Seek activities that foster creativity, enthusiasm and self-esteem in the instructional staff.
- Protect the integrity of the facilitator as a staff developer, not a remediator.
- Incorporate state-of-the-art research and technology in the program's practices.
- Promote the development of instructional leaders in both schools and administrative offices.

The Frederick County staff development framework, based on S. L. Horseley's study (1987), lists critical attributes of an effective staff development program. These attributes are combined with questions to be asked by district school improvement teams. The answers to these questions can serve as indicators to be used as a guide in planning and assessment. The following are critical elements in an effective staff development program:

1. The program should be congruent with the philosophy and organizational structure of the school and district.

   - Has the board of education approved and funded a master plan for staff development?
   - Has the plan provided leadership training programs that feature elements of the effective schools process?
   - Has each department and division within the school system arranged appropriate staff development programs that feature elements of the effective schools process?
   - Do the school-based staff development programs feature elements of the effective schools process?
   - Has a directory of staff development resources been developed and made available to all schools?

2. The program must integrate individual goals with school and district goals.

   - How is the staff involved in meaningful staff development activities?
   - How are individual professional needs addressed?
   - Is the professional development status of adults given attention in all staff development activities?
   - Is there an orientation program which features elements of the effective schools process provided for staff new to the school system?
   - Is there systematic development of internal trainers and a support structure for adopted staff development goals?

3. There should be appropriate participant involvement in goal setting, implementation, evaluation, and decision making.

   - Are staff development activities governed by a district staff development steering committee?
   - Is there an annual needs assessment of all instructional staff? How are the results used?
   - Are the building staff development activities governed by the school improvement team?
   - Is there a system-wide clearinghouse for all staff development programs and practices?

4. Leadership and sustained administrative support are necessary to the program's success.

   - Does the board and superintendent maintain strong support for staff development? How is this demonstrated?
   - Do all instructional leaders model effective staff development practices?
   - Does the teacher leadership program provide opportunity for professional growth?
   - Are there opportunities for all staff to attend leadership institutes and seminars?

5. The program must incorporate available knowledge bases.

   - Is there collaboration of staff development and curriculum specialists to provide the best means to blend content and methodology in classroom settings?
   - Is there incorporation of state-of-the-art technology into classroom application?
   - Are opportunities provided to learn about best practices and research results?

6. Program designs should be built on principles of adult learning and the change process.

   - How do the programs take into account what is known about adult learning?
   - Are the programs meaningful to those using the activities?
   - Are three to five years allowed for assimilation of change?
   - How is staff development viewed as change, both personally and organizationally?

7. Time should be provided to work on staff development and assimilate new learnings.

   - Is it evident that there is commitment to the change process?
   - Are there multiple opportunities for reflection, research, and coaching?

8. Collegiality and collaboration among staff members are essential to the program's success.

   - Is coaching seen as an integral part of instructional improvement?
   - Are problems solved collaboratively among departments, schools and offices?
   - Is there collaboration of staff development and curriculum specialists to provide the best means to blend content and methodology in classroom settings?

9. Experimentation and risk taking should be encouraged.

   - Are new strategies and curriculum transferred into classrooms through coaching?
   - Are instructional staff encouraged to pursue new ideas?
   - Do school-based staff development resource teachers assist with coaching opportunities and acquisition of new strategies?
   - Are there system-trained (internal) cadres who provide building-based training for innovations and changes?

10. Appropriate incentives and rewards will help build districtwide enthusiasm for the program.

    - Are foundation dollars used to support conference attendance?
    - Does the system invest in internal trainers and consultants?
    - Is there widespread participation in recognition programs for teachers and administrators?

Adapted from: Horseley, S. L.
Continuing to Learn: A Guidebook for Teacher Development.

Barriers to effective staff development. In his discussion of why most professional development fails, Fullan notes that staff development led by a school district is "one of the largest and potentially strongest forms of staff development but represents another instance of frequently missed opportunities." (p. 316) Fullan cites Pink's 1989 study of four urban improvement projects, which identified 12 factors that were barriers to effective staff development:

1. an inadequate theory of implementation, resulting in too little time for teachers and school leaders to plan for and learn new skills and practices;
2. district tendencies toward faddism and quick-fix solutions;
3. lack of sustained central office support and follow-through;
4. underfunding the project, or trying to do too much with too little support;
5. attempting to manage the projects from the central office instead of developing school leadership and capacity;
6. lack of technical assistance and other forms of intensive staff development;
7. lack of awareness of the limitations of teacher and school administrator knowledge about how to implement the project;
8. the turnover of teachers in each school;
9. too many competing demands or overload;
10. failure to address the incompatibility between project requirements and existing organizational policies and structure;
11. failure to understand and take into account site-specific differences among schools.
12. failure to clarify and negotiate the role relationships and partnerships involving the district and the local university.

(cited in Fullan, pp. 316–317)

Staff development survey

The following questions can be used to assess the effectiveness of the district staff development program. The questions are applicable to any training segments as opposed to single episodic events.

- What percentage of the staff has been trained?
- How much training? How many hours?
- When did training occur?
- What follow-up has occurred?
  - Is coaching provided by the principal?
  - Is coaching provided by the staff development specialist?
  - Is there a peer coaching plan in place?
  - Do periodic review sessions occur? When and how?
- What follow-through has occurred?
  - What data have been collected relative to the implementation of the practice?
  - What data have been collected showing that the practice has made a difference for students?
  - Do administrators regularly incorporate discussion of research on elements of instruction in staff meetings?
- What steps have occurred to internalize the new practice?
- Is there a district plan for the new practice? For how many years?
- Is the plan periodically updated?

Adapted from Lawrence W. Lezotte and Michelle L. Maksimowicz.
Workbook for Developing A District Plan for School Improvement based on the Effective Schools Research.
Michigan Institute for Educational Management, Lansing, Michigan, 1989.

Summary

One of the basic axioms of effective schools research is that school improvement occurs school by school, one school at a time. This axiom has proven true for the most part, in that school change is successful only when a school's faculty, staff, and parents take charge of that school's change process. But the axiom should not be interpreted to mean that an individual school can improve without the support of the larger organization and community of which it is a part. Research has shown that it is very difficult to initiate school improvement, and even harder to sustain it, if the local district does not support the change process aggressively in a variety of different ways. This book has described the policies, organizational practices, and programs that are necessary to sustain the school-by-school improvements.

Our goal in writing this book has been to describe what must be done, and by whom, if school improvement is to be successfully initiated and sustained over the long haul. Successful district and school change is most likely to occur when all the major stakeholders (internal and external) are involved in the change process from the outset. As central as the school's faculty and administration is to the school improvement process, they cannot achieve school improvement alone.

Comparing the transformation of our public schools to an endless journey is an appropriate metaphor for many reasons. First, an endless journey conveys the notion that once it has begun there will be no turning back. It suggests that everyone who is planning to make the journey had better be there when it begins. It also suggests that we should be sure that we bring everything we value with us. The leaders of the endless journey need to ask two questions: "Do we have

everybody with us?" and "Have those who have decided to make the journey clarified what of value they wish to bring?"

Preparing for an endless journey also requires a sense of destination, a shared vision, and a set of governing beliefs and values to be developed and widely communicated to all who are a part of this endless journey. If these steps are completed appropriately, there will be broad-based commitment to the effort. Without this high level of shared commitment, the hazards presented along the journey are likely to jeopardize its successful outcome. In addition, the broad-based commitment will be required when the community of shared vision and values has to create an organizational culture that translates the vision—these beliefs and values—into a mission and a set of rules that will be used to guide and govern the forward movement of the school community.

Charting the course for the journey requires two prerequisites: First, a clear vision of the new destination and a clear understanding of the starting point of the journey. In the case of school improvement, we can describe where the school or district is at the outset by assessing its strengths and weaknesses as reflected in valued student outcomes. The organizational culture is assessed by determining the presence or absence, strength or weakness, of certain important organizational dimensions.

Once we know the destination of the journey to school reform, and we know where the school and district is at the outset, we must select the course of action that we must take to move from where we are toward where we want to be. The action plans should be based on at least two major considerations. First, what values from the past do we wish to preserve in our transformed schools? Second, what knowledge (research and proven practices) can we use to guide the

transformation? In the area of school change, the research on school and teacher effectiveness, organizational and individual change research, as well as new research in the cognitive sciences on learning and the human brain, represent some of the areas that ought to inform the process of school reform.

Finally, the school change process, like the successful journey, will require a monitoring system that can be used along the way to make sure the effort is on course and that adjustments in the proposed course of action can be made where necessary. The various sections of this book address one or more of the critical factors that will assure successful school reform, both initially and in the long term. As increasing numbers of schools and districts are successful in their commitment to school reform, more will be learned about how to transform our schools. This book represents the lessons we have learned so far. If these lessons are used to guide others, we are confident that they will produce sustainable school reform.

Appendixes

Appendix A

Strategic Assumptions of the Effective Schools Process*

Like any vision of an alternative and better future state, the effective schools process makes assumptions about schools of the future. Some of these assumptions represent extrapolations of educational trends that are already well under way, and others represent reasoned notions about changes that should occur if our schools are going to be more responsive to more of our learners. Each of these assumptions will be presented, with only brief comments made. When taken together, these assumptions describe the changes that are occurring in the numerous districts that are currently planning or implementing an effective schools process.

When these nine assumptions are transformed into reality they will change the culture of the local school and district. Cultural change takes time, tends to occur in a million little actions, and is clearly incremental. Building on these notions, school improvement can be described as an endless succession of incremental adjustments.

1. **In the future, even more than in the past, all schools will be expected to focus on teaching for learning as their primary mission.**

Throughout history, the public school has been expected to serve the needs of society. Today, public schools are expected to successfully fulfill three basic missions. First, the school is expected to serve the community as an institution of custodial care. Second, the school is expected to serve the community as an institution that sorts and selects students and prepares them for various roles in a highly differentiated society. Finally, the school is expected to serve the community as an institution of teaching for learning.

The effective schools process asks schools to commit to the "teaching for learning" mission as their primary institutional mission.

Two major forces seem to be operating to make it difficult for the local school to maintain a primary focus on the teaching for learning mission. First, the changing

* This paper appeared in a slightly different form in *Journal of Maine Education*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter 1989, pp. 3-11.

nature of the American family structure, with more children being raised by single parents, and the proliferation of the two-parent working families, means that more and more of the custodial responsibilities for child rearing are shifting to the school. This would not, in and of itself, be a problem except that the demand for additional custodial services has tended to reach the school many years before the financial and human resources necessary to provide the service. The prospects for the future are going to be a continuing challenge to educators, for, as far as one can see, the American public school is caught in the rising tide of expectations around the custodial mission.

The second force that distracts the school from its primary teaching for learning mission is the demand that schools sort students. The public is unwilling to accept schools that teach all children. In many ways, intended or not, many of the innovations that have arisen from the "Excellence Movement," such as higher standards and stricter graduation requirements, are having the effect of increasing the sorting and selecting function of the schools.

The implications are clear: if schools commit to the teaching for learning mission, that act is tantamount to engagement in a political struggle against these other powerful forces. If schools are going to live up to the American Dream, they must be prepared to engage in that political struggle.

2. In the future, even more than in the past, schools will be held accountable for measurable results or outcomes.

The call for accountability that has had a major impact on the public school for the last two decades or so is largely a movement that asks schools to be more accountable for measurable results, i.e., outcomes. At this time, there is little indication that the pendulum is likely to swing back in the other direction. In fact, the evidence suggests a further intensification of the call for evidence of outcomes.

If we accept this continuing trend as being the "new truth" to which schools must respond, then this important question must be addressed: "For which outcomes, results or consequences, should schools be held accountable?"

Our standard should be: "Did our students learn what we taught them in our program of curriculum and instruction?" This is the gauntlet of accountability that

should be thrown down. If schools are going to move toward this standard, a major change will have to be made in the measures of school effectiveness. Schools will have to become less dependent on standardized, norm-referenced tests of achievement and, at the same time, increase their use of curriculum-based, criterion-referenced measures of pupil mastery.

If schools take seriously the suggestion for curriculum-based and criterion-referenced measurement, teachers and administrators will have a much broader view of the outcomes of instruction.

The effective schools researchers have been criticized in the past because their research used standardized paper-pencil tests as the measure of school effectiveness. This criticism is both accurate and, at the same time, a bit unfair. The effective schools researchers studied schools as they found them; the fact is schools, then and now, tend to measure students outcomes mainly by a fairly narrow band of norm-referenced test measures of student achievement.

The important point to remember is that the effective schools process makes no judgement about what is accepted as evidence of pupil mastery but *is* aggressive about the fact that schools should assess outcomes in a fair and appropriate manner. We now urge schools to construct their own measures, aimed at assessing their success with their own curriculum and goals.

3. **Educational equity will receive increasing emphasis as the number of poor and minority students continues to increase in proportion to the rest of the population.**

One of the principal reasons why the effective schools process is receiving such favorable attention is that it emphasizes educational equity. The demographic trends are clear and generally known. The number of public school students who come from middle class and more advantaged homes is declining rapidly, and this trend is projected to continue in the foreseeable future. At the same time, the number of children coming into the public school system from poor and disadvantaged back-grounds is increasing, and this trend is projected to continue. The client system is changing, and educational equity in student outcomes is going to be a major political issue for the future.

The effective school process asks schools to analyze their measured student outcomes through the process of disaggregation. When schools disaggregate their outcome data, they are breaking the measures down along the lines of the major subgroups in their student population. The three most frequently used variables for disaggregation are gender, race or ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Schools that have used the process of disaggregation are quick to indicate that the analysis permitted them to see themselves in an important new way. Sometimes the staff is pleasantly surprised because the results look better than they had anticipated; sometimes they are disappointed because the results are worse than they had feared. Whatever the response, the analysis helps to stimulate a productive discourse about the impact of their program on all their learners.

4. **Decision making will be more decentralized as the individual school is recognized as the production center of public education and, therefore, the strategic unit for planned change.**

The story of public education over the last several decades is the story of centralization. Clearly, more and more of the decision making, both with respect to expected outcomes and prescriptions of process, has moved further from the individual classroom and school and more toward central office, state departments, and even the federal level.

In the private sector, corporate leaders have begun to act on the belief that the next increments of increased productivity in their organizations will only come if decision making is moved back to the shop floor of the industry. We hope that public sector organizations like schools will quickly see the virtue in this strategy. Robert Waterman in his popular book, *The Renewal Factor*, says that the people who are in the best position to improve the organization's productivity are the people who currently do the work of that organization. The keys are *involvement* and *decentralization*.

Decentralization should not be interpreted by either the state or local authorities as an abdication of their responsibility. The legitimate authorities have a duty to clarify and give direction to the schools. That is, the state and local authorities have a responsibility to clearly articulate the goals and priorities of the schools and make

clear what they will accept as evidence of progress toward those goals. Beyond that, each school unit should be given as much discretion as is possible regarding how the available resources will be deployed to achieve those intended outcomes.

5. **Collaboration and staff empowerment must increase if building-level staff are going to become meaningfully involved in the planning, problem-solving, and evaluation of their schools' programs.**

Empowerment is one of the most popular terms in the educational community today. Many administrators fear it, many teachers seem to want it, while many others seem to be frightened by it.

Empowerment means accepting responsibility for one's own actions. In the context of this paper and the effective schools process, it is the individual school which is being empowered. The educators who constitute the teaching community of the school are being encouraged to take greater responsibility for their collective actions. Empowerment should not mean that each teacher, acting as an individual, is expected to behave as if her/his classroom were a free-standing one-room schoolhouse. Rather, the whole faculty should be empowered to use their collective knowledge to make collective judgements and take collective actions toward school improvement.

These actions and judgements should be designed to move the school and its students toward those educational goals that have been articulated by those with the authority to make such pronouncements.

To empower any group in which the goals of the group are not clear is really not an act of empowerment. It is more likely to create a milling crowd. It is preferable for the local board of education to seek the advice of the professional educators before establishing the ends of education. However, once these are in place, it becomes the obligation of the school community to strive to meet these goals. In part, the major problem has been that boards of education have told school faculty not only what to do, but how to do it.

The prospects for school improvement through the process of school-by-school empowerment are, indeed, great. Schools tend to be very isolating organizations, and as a result, the school as an organization does not do a good job of tapping the

potential of its people. Ron Edmonds once said that if we are going to achieve school improvement in the United States, we must first get teachers to understand and accept the limitations of what they can do if they continue to work alone. He went on to say that when the limitations are acknowledged, then we will be able to go on and talk to teachers about the possibilities of what they can accomplish if they work together.

6. **School empowerment processes will emphasize the utilization of research and descriptions of effective practices as a major source of input to school change.**

The effective schools process starts with the sensible assumption that teachers and administrators are already doing the best they know to do, given the conditions in which they find themselves. If one accepts this assumption but still wants to improve the current outcomes of schooling, then it becomes clear what must happen. The professional educators need to add to what they know and proceed to change the current conditions in which they work.

One source of new knowledge for teachers can be found in research, and another can be found in the case descriptions of practices that have proven effective elsewhere. In order to assure that the best available practices are known to all, the local district needs to invest resources in staff development and continuing education to be sure that their professional community operates from a state-of-the-art knowledge base.

Fortunately, the field of educational research has undergone a significant transformation itself. Much of the research of the last twenty years or so, including the effective schools research, was conducted in real schools and classrooms and uses a language that is meaningful to the practicing educator. When teachers and administrators read and reflect on this research they will find it much easier to see it is for schools and classrooms. This greatly reduces the old research-into-practice problem that seemed to paralyze the educational community in the past.

Make no mistake, research and knowledge of best available practices do not provide all the answers. Much remains to be done; but research tells us that some things do tend to work better than others, and it thereby identifies places to begin the improvement journey.

7. **Technology will be used to accelerate the rate of feedback currently available in instructional monitoring systems used by teachers and administrators.**

One of the major shortcomings present in schools today is the absence of re-teaching. Here, re-teaching is meant to include a wide range of strategies that the teacher can use when some of the students in the class did not master an essential concept or skill after the initial instruction by the teacher. If the powerful concept of re-teaching is to be used efficiently and effectively, three conditions must exist. First, the school mission and core values must create the expectation that the first obligation of the teacher is to assure mastery of the intended curriculum. Second, teachers need to feel empowered to use time and other institutional strategies (e.g. regrouping) to be sure that each student has ample opportunity to learn for mastery. Third, teachers need timely feedback on student performance so they know who to move forward, who to re-teach and what re-teaching areas demand special emphasis. It is to this third point that the use of new technology seems immediately most promising. Technology now exists, and is in operation in some places, that permits the teacher to receive nearly instantaneous analysis of student work. Why is this so crucial to re-teaching?

In the past, teachers often saw the measurement of student achievement as disconnected from instruction because of a lack of alignment between the taught and tested curriculum. Second, teachers found the test results of little use because the results were often not available to the teacher for days or weeks after the test administration. Accelerating the rate at which the feedback can be made available will allow teachers to make better decisions about re-teaching. If there is one strategy of learning that is undervalued and underutilized by the typical school today, it is re-teaching to assure student mastery.

8. **School administrators will be expected to demonstrate skills both as efficient managers and effective visionary leaders.**

One of the strong messages that comes from the effective schools research is the critical role that leadership plays in initiating and sustaining the processes of school improvement. When this research is coupled with much of the contemporary research in the general area of leadership, it seems clear and compelling to think that our local school and district leaders need both knowledge and demonstrated skills in managing a vision-driven organization.

The implications that can be drawn from this research are far reaching indeed. For example, the training and certification of prospective administrators needs to change to reflect this new focus. Second, local boards of education need to place greater emphasis on leadership for school improvement as an essential competency for the various administrative positions. Third, local districts are going to have to accept more responsibility for inservice training of administrators. Currently, the opportunities for practicing administrators to involve themselves in academy programs are increasing rapidly, and organizational encouragement and support must be forthcoming as well. Finally, the evaluation of administrators must be changed. Past evaluation procedures tended to emphasize the efficient management of the school. Now these procedures must be modified to signal both expectation for and reward of change-oriented leadership. This means that risks must be taken and mistakes will be made but, in the final analysis, such risk taking must be rewarded rather than punished.

One suggestion that seems to be working well for many local districts is to offer prospective administrators pre-leadership training opportunities. Such experiences will allow the prospective administrators to develop skills and also provide the opportunity for the candidate to be observed in "real world" settings. Hopefully, such programs will reduce the number of misplaced administrators in the future.

9. By emphasizing student outcomes, schools will be able to loosen the prescriptions of process, thus leading to school restructuring

If *empowerment* is one of the most popular terms in education today, *school restructuring* is the other. Scholars have spoken about the need for significant change in the current school organization, role definitions, and administrative procedures as both desirable and even necessary prerequisites for lasting school improvement. Little disagreement exists that certain aspects of current school culture make it difficult to serve students effectively. The question is how to begin this needed restructuring in a way that is feasible.

Schools will not likely be able to begin the business of restructuring unless the school is within a safety net to assure that students are not unfortunate victims of failed restructuring. One way to establish this safety net around a school is to make certain that student outcomes or results are closely monitored in a way that indicates the levels of student mastery of the intended curriculum. Parents are not likely to

allow schools to be at variance from the norms of other schools, unless these parents can be shown convincing evidence that the new processes are working as well as, or even better than, the old.

Teachers and building-level administrators will be energized by the opportunity of doing things differently, but they will not be willing to risk much unless they, too, can be convinced that better results are forthcoming.

We have been very prescriptive of the processes of schooling in the past because we did not know a better way. Today, the call for evidence of results provides educators with a new way of thinking about the instructional processes. Perhaps we can truly test the Jeffersonian notion that the most unequal thing you can do is to treat unequal people equally. We need to be able to differentiate the delivery system, if more of our students are going to be brought to expected levels of curriculum mastery.

Summary

A large number of dedicated educators throughout the United States are planning and implementing programs of school improvement based on the effective schools framework. The strategic assumptions presented above give a sense of the complexity of their task. Schools will not improve much if the staff is simply asked to work harder. Those critics who would have us believe that the effective schools processes are both trivial and mechanistic do not have an appreciation for these strategic assumptions upon which this process rests. The successful implementation of these changes will require commitment, persistence and a great deal of political will.

One of the keys to continued commitment is to be able to see the results. The staff in the effective schools districts will see the results, and they will feel good about those results and their role in bringing them about. Teachers, administrators, board members, and state officials all must pursue these means to release the pent-up desire already present to produce better outcomes for more students.

Appendix B

Correlates of Effective Schools*

The following pages provide succinct descriptions of the seven characteristics of effective schools as identified from the research of Ronald Edmonds and Lawrence Lezotte. Please note that the term *characteristic* is often used interchangeably with the term *correlate* (i.e., correlates with student success) or *alterable element* (i.e., capable of being altered by the school).

1. Safe and Orderly Environment

In the effective school, there is an orderly, purposeful businesslike atmosphere which is free from threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.

As Described by Ronald Edmonds

One set of correlates deals with school climate. These are almost tangible measures: effective schools are relatively safer, relatively cleaner, relatively more orderly, relatively quieter, and so on. We collected data about the incidence of burned out light bulbs, the content of the dirt in the corners and stairwells, patterns of interior decoration, and so on. (Make up your own favorite list of things you would like to know about schools: we probably recorded it somewhere.) The differences between effective and ineffective schools were "relative": the incidence of broken windows doesn't discriminate, but the time it takes to fix the windows does. Similarly, the quantity of dirt in the corners and stairwells doesn't discriminate, but the turnover in the content of the dirt does. The substance of the pattern of interior decoration doesn't discriminate, but it is a notable characteristic of the effective schools that they tend to be physically dominated by student work. (I don't mean art work; I mean academic work.) These findings bear on the question of whether the correlates are causal. It's pretty clear that broken windows don't cause either elevated or depressed achievement; the relevance of the window is that it's a stand-in for adult attention to environment. A broken window that goes for a long time

* These descriptions are based on a document compiled by Robert E. Sudlow, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Spencerport Central Schools, Spencerport, New York.

without being repaired gives a message to everybody that the people who are responsible for this place don't care very much about it. Display of student academic work clearly doesn't cause a rise or fall in work. The adults have to care about the work: they have to pick it, they have to choose it, they have to display it, they have to take it down and replace it. I think those are the kinds of analyses that are going to get us closer to a causal understanding of the correlates.

As Described by Lawrence Lezotte

Since the effective schools' staffs are committed to the important goals of the school, they tend to promote a very businesslike atmosphere in the school. By their patterns and practices these teachers convey a sense of importance about the teaching and learning of essential skills that is not typically found in the less effective schools.

2. Climate of High Expectations for Success

In the effective school, there is a climate of expectation in which the staff believes and demonstrates that all students can attain mastery of the essential school skills and that they, the staff, have the capability to help all students do so.

As Described by Ronald Edmonds

The second set of correlates is based on classroom observation, and our conclusions were vast. There were some pretty dramatic variations in teacher behavior in the effective schools as contrasted to teacher behavior in the ineffective schools. For example, teachers in the ineffective schools tend to be highly selective in choosing students to recite; they are most likely to ask questions of students who, they predict, will know the answer. Teachers in ineffective schools often vary considerably in the imposition of discipline as a function of a pupil's sex, race, and social class. Some of them are more lenient with black children than whites; others are vice versa; some are harsher with poor children than middle-class children, or vice versa. The significance is in the variability. Teachers in the ineffective schools tend to vary their responses as a function of the characteristics of their students, whereas teacher behavior in the effective schools is much flatter. Our findings are related to those of the teacher effects research. For example, there is variability in the quality of teacher response to recitation. Teachers in the ineffective schools

would get a recitation from a middle class child and they would evaluate it; they'd say that the first part of the answer was right and the second part of the answer was wrong in the following ways, and you ought to think about this or that. There is much less variability in the behavior of teachers in the effective schools. The teachers in the effective schools make it clear that they expect some of their students to do better than others; they also make it clear, however, that they are working with a minimum academic prerequisite and that they expect everybody to get it. They may expect variability in student performance, but they do not expect that any significant number of children of any race or social class will fail to demonstrate that minimum mastery. They surround themselves with the behaviors I have described as a way of reinforcing their commitment to this basic idea: that all their children are capable of the acquisition of basic school skills.

As Described by Lawrence Lezotte

Perhaps the most significant difference between the effective and less effective school is found in the staff's perception of the learning potential of the students. The staff in an effective school believes that all children can learn what is expected of them in the area of essential skills. This belief is critical; without it the subsequent pattern and practices decisions are directed more toward custodial outcomes than toward learning outcomes. If one believes that all students can learn, then the question becomes how does one best plan for this outcome in terms of the appropriate teaching and learning models to be used.

This belief, that all students can learn, implies that, while individual differences are present and important, they are seen as a moderating rather than limiting influence on learning of essential skills.

In an effective school, not only do teachers believe the students can learn, they also believe that they (the teachers) can teach them. Teachers seem to possess a high sense of efficacy believing that they have the competence, skills, and determination to insure that students learn what is expected of them. In contrast, the staff of a less effective school often indicate that they are powerless with respect to teaching some of the students. They will often say that maybe somebody knows how to motivate these students, but they do not know how.

3. Instructional Leadership

In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates that mission to the staff, parents, and students. The principal understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program.

As Described by Ronald Edmonds

The third correlate is that the principals of effective schools behave in ways that are observably, demonstrably, and sometimes dramatically different from the way that principals behave in ineffective schools. The main difference is that principals of effective schools are the instructional leaders in their building, while those in ineffective schools are not. Considering this characteristic alone, you can see that the criteria of effective schools are not easy to meet. After all, principals are not trained to instructional leadership, they aren't chosen for it, they aren't punished for not doing it. The typical career route to becoming a principal is that you first teach in the social studies department and then become coach of the football team; by and by they make you a principal. It's therefore extraordinary in many respects that we have any principals at all who manifest instructional leadership. However, it does turn out that there are significant numbers of men and women presiding over public schools who have this characteristic. I do not have time to describe all the behaviors that are associated with instructional leadership here, but you may be able to infer what they are.

As Described by Lawrence Lezotte

In the effective schools, the teachers recognize the need for coordination and support. They look to and expect their principals to be instructional leaders. In turn, the principals feel a sense of responsibility to the teachers to discharge the leadership role. As a result, the principals are much closer to the day-to-day instructional program, closely monitor pupil progress, and provide systematic feedback on goal attainments throughout the school year.

4. Clear and Focused Mission

In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated school mission through which the staff shares an understanding of a commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability. Staff accepts responsibility for students' learning of the school's essential curricular goals.

As Described by Ronald Edmonds

The fourth set of correlates has to do with school focus, instructional emphasis, and institutional mission. However, it is not the substantive content of the focus that concerns us: The key variable is the proportion of the adults in the school who know what the focus is. We chose cross-sections of adults in both the effective and ineffective schools and asked them, "What does this school care most about?" In the ineffective schools, the answer varied as the function of the person to whom we put the question. When we put it to a cross-section of adults in effective schools, however, the answer was highly uniform. Almost everybody answered the question the same way. They didn't all say that they liked the answer, but they clearly knew what the answer was. You can easily see the relationship of this correlate to instructional leadership. It would be hard for a principal to say to a teacher, "There is a discrepancy between your behavior and the institutional focus of this school," if there were no connection between the principal's and the teacher's definition of that focus. Collegial interaction is a good deal easier when there is widely understood articulation of the mission of the school.

If you analyze the answers to the question, "What does this school care most about?" you find that they don't really vary much at all. Most teachers mention pupil acquisition of school skills. Then they usually go on to talk about some aspect of socialization, some interest in creativity and independent thinking, or perhaps "taking the student to his fullest intellectual potential."

The point is that any organization is more cohesive if all parties understand its major purpose. In an effective organization, the leader articulates its major purposes and then undertakes systematic dissemination.

As Described by Lawrence Lezotte

The staffs of effective schools believe that the school is a complex and interconnected social system and learning community. While they value professional autonomy, they recognize the interconnected nature of learning goals and learning events from grade to grade and teacher to teacher. They are willing to forgo some degree of autonomy to insure that their individual efforts fit into and serve the long-term overall goals of the school. The teachers concern themselves with the progressive nature of the curriculum and are more willing to look to their professional colleagues for advice, support, and guidance. These schools appear to evidence a greater sense of community around the mission and goals of the school. Their staffs feel a high degree of responsibility to their colleagues and their students.

5. Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task

In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential skills. For a high percentage of this time, students are engaged in whole class or large group learning activities that are planned and teacher directed.

As Described by Ronald Edmonds

These [ineffective] schools have a rather modest sense of their obligation. It is modest because the only obligation they accept is to provide students with bodies of knowledge and sets of skills that give them a choice of whether or not to go on to the next grade. That applies to almost every level of schooling that they offer. There is no attempt here to consider the relevance of instruction, no discussion of whether it is relevant to learn to read ordinary textual materials at all.

As Described by Lawrence Lezotte

The staffs of effective schools believe that the societal expectations for the schools clearly center around the essential skills. They believe that the schools exist primarily to insure that students master basic cognitive skills. Consequently, these teachers allocate time and resources in accordance with these publicly recognized priorities. The teachers are more willing to be held accountable for their individual and collective accomplishments in teaching the essential skills.

6. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

In the effective school, student academic progress is measured frequently. A variety of assessment procedures are used. The results of the assessments are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program.

As Described by Ronald Edmonds

The sixth set of correlates, which may turn out to be the most powerful, concerns school use of performance on standardized achievement tests as a basis for program evaluation. People in the ineffective schools tend to be unmoved by pupil performance on standardized tests, especially when the data show that the middle-class kids are doing fine and the poor kids are doing poorly. That is, such data have no effect on the programs: people in ineffective schools explain them away. They say that the poor children have intrinsic disabilities — cognitive, linguistic, cultural, environmental, and so on — that explain their depressed achievement; therefore, they are quite unmoved by what they see. The major characteristics of the ineffective schools is the extent to which they do in perpetuity whatever they always did, even if it accrued to the distinct disadvantage of a very significant proportion of their pupil performance on standardized tests. In contrast, in the effective schools individual teachers as well as the school as a whole are significantly influenced by pupil performance on standardized tests as well as available curricular-based assessments of student mastery. Such assessments are taken frequently, and when [schools] don't get the results they want (all students mastering the curriculum), they try something else. What they want, of course, is the continual demonstration of the universal educability of their pupil population. You might say that effective schools spend as much time avoiding things that don't work as they do gravitating toward things that do. That is probably the most powerful of the correlates, in the sense that it has the capacity to drive all the rest of them.

The reality is that poor children, especially, are sometimes portrayed as having made satisfactory progress when they're actually not even close to mastery.

Some suggested methods for the measurement of student achievement follow:

1. locally generated to insure that students are tested on what they are taught.

2. nationally validated to insure that the definition of mastery in one particular school district is acceptable in other school districts.

3. once again, curriculum based, to insure that students are tested on what they are taught.

4. criterion-referenced to insure accuracy of assessment one student at a time.

5. standardized to eliminate teacher subjectivity as a possible source of error.

As Described by Lawrence Lezotte

In the effective school, staff believe that the primary evidence for judging the school's success is to be found in the evidence of curriculum mastery that comes from frequent assessment of students' performance. To that end, the effective schools staff pay careful attention to three critical factors: First, they place more emphasis on those assessments that are designed to determine whether the students have learned what they have been taught. In that way, effective schools attend to the critical issue of the alignment between intended, taught and tested curriculum. Second, the effective school staff use more frequent assessments so that they can adjust instruction and, where necessary, engage in strategies such as re-teaching in a timely fashion to maximize student success. Third, the teachers in effective schools strive to develop assessments of curriculum mastery that are authentic to the instructional objectives and are as performance based as is feasible. In other words, they use a variety of assessments which, when taken as a whole, match the activities and tasks that were used in the instructional process itself.

7. Home/School Relations

Parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are made to feel that they have an important role in achieving this mission.

As Described by Ronald Edmonds

Many of these schools have very low levels of parent/community participation. Many of them also have high levels, but it is pretty clear to me that there is no relationship between the level of parent participation and school effectiveness. It is certainly

desirable to have the most exalted level of parent participation you can get, and we never design school improvement programs that don't include parent participation; but the lesson I learned from the data is that you are never to depend on it. One of the great implications of this work is that programs of school intervention must fix their attention exclusively on those characteristics over which the school has control. Everything else is to be left to somebody else.

As Described by Lawrence Lezotte

Let me elaborate on this issue of home/school relations and parent involvement. First, some of the effective schools studies do not include parent involvement as a characteristic, while others do. This happens partly because some researchers attended to this variable more than others.

With respect to school improvement, my general position is that any and all school improvement programs should allow for and aggressively pursue high levels of parent involvement. On the other hand, no school faculty can avoid a responsibility to be effective or improve because parents are unable or unwilling to be actively involved. If this provision is ignored, some educators may rationalize doing nothing because they don't see the prerequisite levels of parent involvement present.

A second observation regarding parent involvement is needed. We know that the parents most ready to participate are often not representative of all the parents who have children in the school. The school must be sensitive to this, because the school cannot afford to overreact to the wants and needs of the active parents, especially if to do so may not be in the educational best interests of some students. Obviously a school should strive to gain and sustain active participation from the full range of parents, but this may be difficult, so caution is warranted.

Appendix C

Correlates of Effective Schools
The First and Second Generation

by
Lawrence W. Lezotte

We've already done effective schools, what's next?

A number of schools have been relying on effective schools research as the framework for their school improvement program. After three or four years, many claim that they have successfully met the criteria described in the research on the correlates of effective schools. These educators ask if there is anything that comes after, or goes beyond, these standards.

The concept of second generation correlates attempts to incorporate the recent research and school improvement findings and offers an even more challenging developmental stage to which schools committed to the *learning for all* mission ought to aspire.

There are two underlying assumptions to keep in mind: First, school improvement is an endless journey. Second, the second generation correlates cannot be implemented successfully unless the first generation correlate standards are present in the school. In one sense, the second generation correlates represent a developmental step beyond the first and, when successfully accomplished, will move the school even closer to the mission of *learning for all.*

1. Safe and Orderly Environment

The First Generation: *In the effective school, there is an orderly, purposeful, businesslike atmosphere which is free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.*

The Second Generation: In the first generation, the safe and orderly environment correlate was defined in terms of the *absence of undesirable student behavior (e.g., students fighting).* In the second generation, the concept of a school environment conducive to learning for all must move beyond the elimination of undesirable behavior. The second generation will place increased emphasis on the *presence of*

certain desirable behaviors (e.g., cooperative team learning). These second generation schools will be places where students actually help one another.

Moving beyond simply the elimination of undesirable behavior will represent a significant challenge for many schools. For example, it is unlikely that a school's faculty could successfully teach its students to work together unless the adults in the school model collaborative behaviors in their own professional working relationships. Since schools as workplaces are characterized by their isolation, creating more collaborative/cooperative environments for both the adults and students will require substantial commitment and change in most schools.

First, teachers must learn the technologies of teamwork. Second, the school will have to create the opportunity structures for collaboration. Finally, the staff will have to nurture the belief that collaboration, which often requires more time initially, will assist the schools to be more effective and satisfying in the long run.

But schools will not be able to get students to work together cooperatively unless they have been taught to respect human diversity and appreciate democratic values. These student learnings will require a major and sustained commitment to multicultural education. Students and the adults who teach them will need to come to terms with the fact that the United States is no longer a nation *with* minorities. We are now a nation *of* minorities. This new reality is currently being resisted by many of our community and parent advocacy groups, as well as by some educators.

2. Climate of High Expectations for Success

The First Generation: *In the effective school, there is a climate of expectation in which the staff believe and demonstrate that all students can attain mastery of the essential school skills, and the staff also believe that they have the capability to help all students achieve that mastery.*

The Second Generation: In the second generation, the emphasis placed on high expectations for success will be broadened significantly. In the first generation, expectations were described in terms of *attitudes and beliefs that suggested how the teacher should behave in the teaching-learning situation.* Those descriptions sought to tell teachers how they should initially deliver the lesson. For example, high expectations meant that the teacher should evenly distribute questions asked among all students and should provide each student with an equal opportunity to participate

in the learning process. Unfortunately, this equalization of opportunity, though beneficial, proved to be insufficient to assure mastery for many learners. Teachers found themselves in the difficult position of having had high expectations and having acted upon them—yet some students still did not learn.

In the second generation, the teachers will anticipate this, and they will develop a broader array of responses. For example, teachers will implement *additional strategies,* such as reteaching and regrouping, *to assure that all students do achieve mastery.* Implementing this expanded concept of high expectations will require the school *as an organization* to reflect high expectations. Most of the useful strategies will require the cooperation of the school as a whole; teachers cannot implement most of these strategies working alone in isolated classrooms.

High expectations for success will be judged, not only by the initial staff beliefs and behaviors, but also by the organization's response when some students do not learn. For example, if the teacher plans a lesson, delivers that lesson, assesses learning, finds that some students did not learn, and still goes on to the next lesson, then that teacher didn't expect the students to learn in the first place. If the school condones through silence that teacher's behavior, it apparently does not expect the students to learn, or the teacher to teach these students.

Several changes are called for in order to implement this expanded concept of high expectations successfully. First, teachers will have to come to recognize that high expectations for student success must be launched from a platform of *teachers having high expectations for self.* Then the school organization will have to be *restructured to assure that teachers have access to more tools* to help them achieve successful learning for all. Third, schools, as cultural organizations, must recognize that *schools must be transformed from institutions designed for instruction to institutions designed to assure learning.*

3. Instructional Leadership

The First Generation: *In the effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates that mission to the staff, parents, and students. The principal understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program.*

The Second Generation: In the first generation, the standards for instructional leadership *focused primarily on the principal and the administrative staff of the*

school. In the second generation, instructional leadership will remain important; however, the concept will be broadened and *leadership will be viewed as a dispersed concept that includes all adults, especially the teachers.* This is in keeping with the teacher empowerment concept; it recognizes that a principal cannot be the only leader in a complex organization like a school. With the democratization of organizations, especially schools, the *leadership function becomes one of creating a community of shared values.* The mission will remain critical because it will serve to give the community of shared values a shared sense of "magnetic north," an identification of what this school community cares most about. The role of the principal will be changed to that of a leader of leaders, rather than a leader of followers. Specifically, the *principal will have to develop his/her skills as coach, partner and cheerleader.* The broader concept of leadership recognizes that leadership is always delegated from the followership in any organization. It also recognizes what teachers have known for a long time and what good schools have capitalized on since the beginning of time: namely, expertise is generally distributed among many, not concentrated in a single person.

4. Clear and Focused Mission

The First Generation: *In the effective school, there is a clearly articulated school mission through which the staff shares an understanding of and commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability. Staff accept responsibility for students' learning of the school's essential curricular goals.*

The Second Generation: In the first generation the effective school mission emphasized *teaching for learning for all.* The two issues that surfaced were: Did this really mean all students or just those with whom the schools had a history of reasonable success? When it became clear that this mission was *inclusive of all students* especially the children of the poor (minority and nonminority), the second issue surfaced. It centered itself around the question: Learn what? Partially because of the accountability movement and partially because of the belief that disadvantaged students could not learn higher-level curricula, the focus was on *mastery of mostly low-level skills.*

In the second generation, the focus will shift toward a more appropriate *balance between higher-level learning and those more basic skills that are truly prerequisite to their mastery.* Designing and delivering a curriculum that responds to the demands of accountability and is responsive to the need for higher levels of learning

will require substantial staff development. Teachers will have to be better trained to *develop curricula and lessons with the end in mind.* They will have to know and be comfortable with the concept of *backward mapping,* and they will need to know *task analysis.* These tools of the trade are essential for an efficient and effective results-oriented school that successfully serves all students.

Finally, a subtle but significant change in the concept of school mission deserves notice. Throughout the first generation, effective schools proponents advocated the mission of *teaching for learning for all.* In the second generation the *advocated mission will be learning for all.* The rationale for this change is that the *teaching for* portion of the old statement created ambiguity (although this was unintended) and kept too much of the focus on teaching rather than learning. This allowed people to discount school learnings that were not the result of direct teaching. Finally, the new formulation of *learning for all* opens the door to the continued learning of the educators as well as the students.

5. Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task

The First Generation: *In the effective school, teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential skills. For a high percentage of this time students are engaged in whole class or large group, teacher-directed, planned learning activities.*

The Second Generation: In the second generation, time will continue to be a difficult problem for the teacher. In all likelihood, *the problems that arise from too much to teach and not enough time to teach it will intensify.* In the past, when the teachers were oriented toward covering curricular content and more content was added, they knew their response should be to speed up. Now teachers are being asked to stress the mission that assures that the *students master the content that is covered.* How are they to respond? In the next generation, teachers will have to become more *skilled at interdisciplinary curriculum,* and they will need to learn how to comfortably *practice organized abandonment.* They will have to be able to ask the question, "What goes and what stays?" One of the reasons that many of the mandated approaches to school reform have failed is that, in every case, the local school was asked to do more! One of the characteristics of the most effective schools is their willingness to declare that some things are more important than others; they are willing to abandon some less important content so as to be able to have enough time dedicated to those areas that are valued the most.

The only alternative to abandonment would be to adjust the available time that students spend in school, so that those who need more time to reach mastery would be given it. The necessary time must be provided in a quality program that is not perceived as punitive by those in it, or as excessive by those who will have to fund it. These conditions will be a real challenge indeed!

If the American dream and the democratic ideal of educating everyone is going to move forward, we must explore several important policies and practices from the past. Regarding the issue of time to learn, for example, if the children of the disadvantaged present a larger educational task to the teachers and if it can be demonstrated that this larger task will require more time, then our notions of limited compulsory schooling may need to be changed. The current system of compulsory schooling makes little allowance for the fact that some students need more time to achieve mastery. If we could get the system to be more mastery based and more humane at the same time, our nation and its students would benefit immensely.

6. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

The First Generation: *In the effective school, student academic progress is measured frequently through a variety of assessment procedures. The results of these assessments are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program.*

The Second Generation: In the first generation, the correlate was interpreted to mean that the *teachers should frequently monitor their students' learning* and, where necessary, the *teacher should adjust his/her behavior.* Several major changes can be anticipated in the second generation. First, the use of technology will permit teachers to do a better job of monitoring their students' progress. Second, this same technology will allow students to monitor their own learning and, where necessary, adjust their own behavior. The use of computerized practice tests, the ability to get immediate results on homework, and the ability to see correct solutions developed on the screen are a few of the available "tools for assuring student learning."

A second major change that will become more apparent in the second generation is already under way. In the area of assessment the emphasis will continue to shift away from standardized norm-referenced paper-pencil tests and toward curricular-based, criterion-referenced measures of student mastery. In the second generation, the monitoring of student learning will emphasize "more authentic assessments" of

curriculum mastery. This generally means that there will be less emphasis on the paper-pencil, multiple-choice tests, and more emphasis on assessments of products of student work, including performances and portfolios.

Teachers will pay much more attention to the alignment that must exist between the intended, taught, and tested curriculum. Two new questions are being stimulated by the reform movement and will dominate much of the professional educators' discourse in the second generation: "What's worth knowing?" and "How will we know when they know it?" In all likelihood, the answer to the first question will become clear relatively quickly because we can reach agreement that we want our students to be self-disciplined, socially responsible, and just. The problem comes with the second question, "How will we know when they know it?" Educators and citizens are going to have to come to terms with that question. The bad news is that it demands our best thinking and will require patience if we are going to reach consensus. The good news is that once we begin to reach consensus, the schools will be able to deliver significant progress toward these agreed-upon outcomes.

7. Home-School Relations

The First Generation: *In the effective school, parents understand and support the school's basic mission and are given the opportunity to play an important role in helping the school to achieve that mission.*

The Second Generation: During the first generation, the role of parents in the education of their children was always somewhat unclear. Schools often gave lip service to having parents more actively involved in the schooling of their children. Unfortunately, when pressed, many educators were willing to admit that they really did not know how to deal effectively with increased levels of parent involvement in the schools.

In the second generation, the relationship between parents and the school must *be an authentic partnership* between the school and home. In the past when teachers said they wanted more parent involvement, more often than not they were looking for unqualified support from parents. Many teachers believed that parents, if they truly valued education, knew how to get their children to behave in the ways that the school desired. It is now clear to both teachers and parents that the parent involvement issue is not that simple. Parents are often as perplexed as the teachers about the best way to inspire students to learn what the school teaches. The best hope for effectively confronting the problem—and not each other—is to build enough

trust and enough communication to realize that both teachers and parents have the same goal—an effective school and home for all children!

Summary

Whenever someone made a profound or provocative statement to him, the late Ron Edmonds would respond by saying, "You just elevated the level of the discourse!" I am sure that if he could look over the shoulder of the researchers and educators who are currently struggling with the *learning for all* mission, he would conclude that the second generation correlates *do* elevate the level of the effective schools discourse significantly. When we get near the summit of the mountain described in these second generation correlates, someone will be able to see the correlates of the next generation and the challenges that they will bring.

Appendix D

Instruments for Assessing Characteristics of an Effective School

Connecticut Interview — Contact Joan Shoemaker, Connecticut Department of Education, (203) 638-4205

- Elementary version, 1981
- Junior High (Cosgrove) version, 1987
- Senior High (Wilson) version, 1987
- Handbook for use of the Connecticut School Effectiveness Interview and Questionnaire, 1984

Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire —
Contact Joan Shoemaker (203) 638-4205

- Elementary version, 1981— original (revised October 1989)
- Secondary version, Form 2, 1983
- Student version, Form A, 1986
- Student version, Form B, 1986
- Parent version, 1985
- Technical Manual: Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness (undated)
- Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire: Negatively Worded Items
- Connecticut Secondary School Development Questionnaire, Form 2: Negatively Worded Items

Glendale Effective School Assessment Instrument —
Contact Marc Becker, Glendale, Arizona (602) 435-6052

- Staff version, 1989
- Student version, 1989
- Classified Faculty version, 1989
- Conditions and Suggestions for the Use of the Glendale Instrument

Research and Service Institute, Inc.—Contact Willis Furtwengler, Wichita, Kansas, Phone: (316) 634-1871 or FAX: (316) 634-1873

- School Building Assessment Tools, 1992
- School Classroom Assessment Tools, 1992
- School System Assessment Tools, 1992

San Diego County Office of Education Effective Schools Survey — Contact Janet Chrispeels (619) 569-5300

- School Personnel
  - Elementary form, 1986
  - Middle/Junior High School form, 1986
  - High School form, 1986
- Students, 1986
- Parents, 1986
- Staff Interview (undated)
- Scoring Keys
- Developing Reliable and Valid Effective Schools Assessment Instruments

University of Washington School Self Assessment Service — Contact Jerry Bamburg, College of Education, University of Washington (206) 543-3999

- School Assessment Instrument
  - Staff, 1989
  - Students, 1989
  - Parents, 1989

Appendix E

Indicators of School Effectiveness

District School Improvement Staff Perceptions Survey

Example A

Purpose

Anytown School District has been involved in a program of school improvement based on the Effective Schools Research since 1988. Over the last three years this project has been evaluated on an annual basis using a variety of different data sources. The purpose of this survey is to go beyond these routine data gathering procedures and give all professional staff in the schools the opportunity to directly evaluate the project from your professional and personal point of view. The information received from this survey will be analyzed and a report written for the district-level advisory team, superintendent, and board of education. This report is scheduled to be completed and discussed in the fall of 1992.

Procedures

The survey instrument and a self-addressed return envelope is being made available to *all* the professional staff at each school. Once completed, the survey form should be mailed directly to _____ in the envelope provided.

Each staff member should respond from his/her own perceptions.

When the surveys are received the results will be tabulated and the findings reported as group information. All written comments will be transcribed and included as a part of the final report. Please make every effort to write your comments in such a way that they can be easily transcribed.

Since the strategic unit in effective schools research is the individual school, the data will be reported at both the school and district levels. However, no questions will be asked that would make it possible to identify individual teachers or administrators.

Please be assured that your responses will be kept in strict confidence and the analysis will be handled in a professional manner. The survey results will help the district and your school as plans for the coming years are developed.

Demographic Information

1. Please indicate the particular Anytown School in which you currently spend the greatest proportion of your professional time.

____ A. Blank High School
____ B. Uptown Middle School
____ C. Downtown Elementary School
____ D. Any Elementary School
____ E. Town Elementary School

2. How long have you been spending the greatest proportion of your time at that particular school?

____ A. Since before outset of the Effective Schools Project
____ B. More than three years
____ C. Less than three years

3. Which of the following best describes your experience with the school improvement team in your current school?

____ A. I am currently a member of our school improvement team.
____ B. I have been a member of the school improvement team but I am currently not a member.
____ C. I have never been a member of the school improvement team.
____ D. Other. (Please explain.)

_____
_____
_____

Perceived School-by-School Changes

Please read each statement and indicate the response that best describes your perception. With each question you will be given the opportunity to comment further on your response.

4. Most of the current professional staff at your school know what the primary mission of your school is.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

5. The Effective Schools Project has increased the staff's awareness of the mission of your school.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

6. Your school places a great deal of emphasis on measured student outcomes.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

7. The Effective Schools Project has increased the emphasis placed on measured student outcomes.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

8. Your school emphasizes equity in educational outcomes.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

9. The Effective Schools Project has increased the emphasis your school places on equity in educational outcomes.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Agree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

10. In your school, teachers have an opportunity to participate in school-based decision making.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

11. Teacher involvement in school-based decision making has increased as a result of the Effective Schools Project.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

12. In your school, the individual school has a great deal of autonomy when it comes to school-based decisions.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

13. The Effective Schools Project has increased school-based decision making authority.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

14. Your school emphasizes the use of research as an important source of information for school improvement planning and implementation.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

15. The Effective Schools Project has increased staff use of educational research.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

16. Your school has a data-driven system for monitoring and reporting back to staff on student achievement and school factors.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

17. The Effective Schools Project has increased the degree to which measured student achievement and other data are used.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

18. The administrator(s) in your school demonstrate skills as building managers and visionary leaders.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

19. The Effective Schools Project has served to improve the managerial efficiency and visionary leadership skills of the school administrators.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

20. Your school's staff feel empowered to try new approaches to schooling and teaching.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

21. The Effective Schools Project has helped to increase staff's willingness to try new approaches to school procedures and classroom instruction.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

Perceived District Level Changes

When school districts like the Anytown School District plan and implement school improvement programs like the Effective Schools Project, changes tend to occur within the individual schools. In such projects, changes also tend to occur in the district as a whole.

The following questions are designed to assess your perceptions of the current status of several district level factors often impacted by such projects. In addition, you will be asked to indicate whether the Effective Schools Project has impacted upon these factors over the duration of the project.

22. The staff of the schools generally have an accurate description of any demographic changes that are occurring in the community served by the schools.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

23. The Effective Schools Project has helped to increase staff awareness of any demographic changes that are occurring in the community served by the schools.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

24. Generally the professional staff of the schools have a clear understanding of the district's mission, philosophy, and long-range educational goals.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

25. The Effective Schools Project has served to help staff become more informed of the district's mission, philosophy, and long-range educational goals.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

26. The curricular goals and associated essential learner outcomes are clear and well known to virtually all staff in the schools.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

27. The Effective Schools Project has served to clarify curricular goals and essential learner outcomes.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

28. Staff have an opportunity to participate on committees that periodically review and recommend changes in the district's curriculum.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

29. The Effective Schools Project has served to increase teacher interest in, and involvement with, periodic curriculum review and proposed curricular changes.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

30. The curriculum and associated essential learner outcomes are generally well aligned with the district's mission and the district's long-range educational goals.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

31. The Effective Schools Project has helped to increase the degree of alignment between district mission, long-range goals and the curricular program itself.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

32. The measurements of student mastery are well aligned with the intended curricular goals.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

33. The Effective Schools Project has served to increase the degree to which the stated curricular goals are aligned with the measurements of student mastery.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

34. Most staff are familiar with the concept of disaggregating student achievement data and know how to determine which groupings of students are reaching the standard of mastery set by the school district.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

35. The Effective Schools Project has served to help the staff become more familiar with the concept of disaggregation and how to determine which groupings of students are reaching the district standard of mastery.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

36. The instructional monitoring system of the district makes it relatively easy for teachers to receive student achievement results in a timely fashion — so that teachers can make better instructional decisions.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

37. The Effective Schools Project has served to help the district to develop a more responsive instructional monitoring system.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

38. The two-way communication between school-based staff and central office staff keeps all levels of the organization generally well informed.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

39. The Effective Schools Project has served to improve the flow of communication between school-level staff and central office staff.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

40. There is open communication among the staff in your school and between the staff and administration, and people generally believe that they are both informed and listened to.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

41. The Effective Schools Project has served to improve the communication among staff and with administrators in your individual school.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

42. The school-based collaborative process has given teachers more say in setting the goals and determining the practices of your school.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

43. The Effective Schools Project has served to increase the level of teacher collaboration and involvement in school-based goal setting, planning, and decision making.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

44. The current personnel evaluation systems in the school district tend to focus on those personnel behaviors found in the research to be most associated with good professional practice.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

45. The Effective Schools Project has served to bring personnel evaluations systems more in line with good professional practices found in the research.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

46. The school district has provided the necessary time and the financial resources to help staff receive the training necessary to implement the practices associated with the Effective Schools Project.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

47. The Effective Schools Project has served to facilitate the district's allocation of time and financial resources necessary for the level of staff development called for by the project.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

Perceived Classroom Level Changes

48. Teachers in your school have a clear understanding of the instructional goals and expected student outcomes in the courses and subjects they teach.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

49. The Effective Schools Project has served to help teachers get a clearer understanding of the instructional goals and expected learner outcomes in the courses and subjects they teach.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

50. Generally speaking, teachers in your school believe that *nearly all* the students in their classes will learn what is being taught in that class.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

51. The Effective Schools Project has helped to create a higher level of expectation that *nearly all* students will learn what is being taught in the classes.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

52. Generally, teachers in your school believe that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to assure that *nearly all* the students in their classes master what is being taught.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

53. The Effective Schools Project has served to provide teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to assure mastery by *nearly all* the students.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

54. The climate of your school and classroom is conducive to learning and, generally speaking, *nearly all* students are motivated to learn.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

55. The Effective Schools Project has provided school staff with the opportunity to plan and implement school and classroom practices that have improved the overall learning climate of the school.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

56. In your school and classroom, conditions are such that the needed time for instruction is available and used efficiently.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

57. The Effective Schools Project has served to permit staff to increase the efficiency with which instructional time is used in your school.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

58. In your school, teachers monitor student performance frequently, and they feel free to make the necessary grouping and pacing decisions that will assure that *nearly all* the students will evidence mastery of the curriculum.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

59. The Effective Schools Project has served to increase the frequency with which teachers monitor student performance and make necessary adjustments in instructional grouping and pacing.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

60. In your school, the teachers feel a high level of parent support and feel that there is open, two-way communication between the parents and themselves for virtually all their students.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

61. The Effective Schools Project has served to strengthen the levels of parent support and has improved home/school communications.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

62. Teachers in your school feel that they have the support of the administration as they implement their instructional strategies and approaches to classroom organization and management.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____

_____

_____

63. The Effective Schools Project has increased the degree to which teachers feel they have administrative support as they implement new instructional strategies and approaches to classroom organization and management.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

Personal Perceptions & Evaluations

The previous sections of this survey asked for your perceptions of the current status of several factors that may have been affected by the Effective Schools Project at the district, school, and classroom levels. The following questions are designed to assess your personal feelings about the Effective Schools Project as it may have affected you as an individual professional educator.

64. The Effective Schools Project has helped to create a positive professional work environment for teachers and administrators in the school district.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

65. The Effective Schools Project has served to increase the levels of collaboration that occurs between you and your colleagues.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

66. The Effective Schools Project has had a positive impact on the staff morale at your school.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

67. The Effective Schools Project has created more work for teachers and administrators in your school.

____ A. Strongly Agree
____ B. Agree
____ C. Uncertain
____ D. Disagree
____ E. Strongly Disagree

Comment: _____
_____
_____

68. If a *new* teacher or administrator at your school asks you about the Effective Schools Project what would you say in answer to the following questions?

A. What do your consider to be the *most* positive impact of the Effective Schools Project for you personally?

_____
_____
_____

B. What do you consider to be the *least* positive aspect of the Effective Schools Project for you personally?

_____

_____

_____

69. If you could advise the district on one change in the Effective Schools Project that you feel would improve it from your point of view, what advice would you offer?

_____

_____

_____

70. In the final analysis with all things considered, indicate the response which best describes your assessment of the Effective Schools Project as it has been implemented in your school.

The Effective Schools Project has contributed to the improvement of the education that students receive in the Anytown School District.

____ Very Definitely
____ Definitely
____ Probably
____ Definitely Not
____ Very Definitely Not

Comment: _____

_____

_____

71. Please express any other thoughts about the project.

Indicators of School Effectiveness

District School Improvement Staff Perceptions Survey

Example B

The Effective Schools Monitoring Committee is reviewing the progress the district has made with our school improvement efforts during the past three years. The purpose of the survey is to help determine both strengths and concerns. Your opinions are very important to us.

Please leave your completed survey in _____. **Do not** put your name on the survey, as all responses will be kept anonymous and will be compiled for a group report.

Name of School _____

Your role:

_____ teacher

_____ administrator

_____ student

_____ parent

_____ support staff

_____ other (specify) _____

1. Please describe your participation in the school improvement efforts in your school.

   If you have not been a participant, please tell us why.

2. What have been the major school improvement goals or objectives in your building? Please put a √ next to those which are not yet completed.

3. What difference(s) has the school improvement process made

   - in your building?

   - for you?

4. How has the school improvement process made a difference for students? If possible, cite the evidence of this difference.

5. Please indicate what you have learned as a result of being involved in the school improvement process.

6. What, if any, have been the difficulties with school improvement efforts in your building?

7. Specifically, what additional resources are needed?

8. In your opinion, what evidence is there that school improvement has made a difference in Mytown School District?

9. Has the school board and central office demonstrated a commitment to the school improvement process?
   If yes, please cite examples.

   If no, what should be done to demonstrate this commitment?

10. What recommendations do you have regarding the school improvement process?

11. Comments?

Please return to _____ no later than _____.

Barbara C. Jacoby, Ph.D.
Effective Schools Consultant
1992

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